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THE IDEA OF SATAN AS THE HERO OF *PARADISE LOST*

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"GIVE the Devil His Due," a leading Miltonist exhorted his colleagues more than a quarter of a century ago. Five years later he added a timely reminder: an extensive "Postscript to 'Give the Devil His Due.'" The substance of Professor Stoll's plea is still valid today, when the case for the devil seems so generally discredited that its affective and persuasive force is likewise undermined—when readers are so conscious of Satan's absurdities that they forget his cunning and his power, so alert to the fallacies underlying his pretensions that these lose their aesthetic value as probable (or *apparently* probable) illusions.

The appeal to equity is a familiar *topos* in criticism of Milton's Satan and understandably so. Though Milton had raised questions of divine justice only to answer them the more emphatically, readers have sometimes found the questions more plausible than the poet's answers. More than a few have dismissed his epic theodicy as logically and poetically unconvincing. His answers (they objected) were assertions rather than valid solutions; they depended on divine revelation or poetic inspiration, on the testimony of Scripture or the authority of the poet, rather than on demonstrated proofs; and the fundamental issues still remained unresolved. Milton had expressly endeavored to "justify the ways of God to men," but what of God's ways with fallen angels? the dispensations of "eternal Providence" with regard to Lucifer and his legions? or the ways of the poet himself with God, man, and devil alike? The problem of Satan involved principles of equity as well as epic decorum. It was no less a legal than an aesthetic problem; and in attempting to solve it, critics frequently resorted to the techniques of judicial rhetoric. They became, in effect, forensic orators.

For roughly three centuries, readers have demanded justice for Satan; and the validity of his title as hero has been the oldest, and possibly the most persistent, of many controversies over *Paradise Lost*. Like Jarndyce *versus* Jarndyce, the case of the Prince of Hell *versus* his Creator, against Milton or Milton's God, appears to have dragged on interminably, accumulating shelfloads of evidence to the profit of bibliographers, the pleasure of graduate students in search of a dissertation topic, and the dismay of college librarians. With changing critical perspectives, the grounds of debate have shifted continually—from rules of genre to political inspiration, from theological orthodoxy to rhetorical analysis. "The case is altered," not once but many times, and in this postscript to Professor Stoll's postscript we shall consider a few of its Protean metamorphoses.

In several instances, the critic's claim to the impartiality of a judge may seem purely etymological. His instinctive taste (it may appear) is for the profession of barrister; he is apt to assume, altogether too easily, the role of devil's advocate or devil's accuser. (Neither is a very attractive role. The former sometimes verges on blasphemy; the latter carries an awkward official title: *diabolus diaboli.*) Though there are few confirmed "Satanists" or "anti-Satanists" among us, we nevertheless veer towards extremes of veneration or execration. We extol the devil beyond reason or vilify him beyond mercy; we applaud the fallen demigod or jeer at the stumbling clown. The formalities of our literary tribunals and Parnassian assizes become ritual formulas: the liturgies of a hero-cult, or an exorcism with bell, book, and candle.

Like the author of *Paradise Lost,* Miltonists have generally welcomed controversy; and to a disinterested observer the arcana of their profession may seem like "The secrets of the hoary deep" itself—a "dark Illimitable Ocean without bound," where "time and place are lost," and where "Champions fierce" contend for mastery,[1]

[1] Except where otherwise indicated, all quotations from Milton's poetry and prose are taken from John Milton,

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. . . and to battle bring
Thir embryon Atoms; they around the flag
Of each his Faction, in thir several Clans,
Light-arm'd or heavy, sharp, smooth, swift or slow,
Swarm populous, unnumber'd as the Sands. . . .
To whom these most adhere,
Hee rules a moment. . . .

Among these warring factions—some hot, some cold, a few moist, and very many dry—a noncombatant would distinguish several different schools. (He would forgive me, I hope, for mentioning only a few of them here.) There are the experts in nuclear fusion or nuclear fission who attempt to demonstrate the coherence or the incoherence of the Satanic image. There is the historical school which stresses the devil's resemblances to Xerxes or Charles I or Oliver Cromwell. There is the literary-historical school which emphasizes his similarities to Achilles and Odysseus, Lucan's Caesar and Virgil's Turnus, or the defiant hero of Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound.* There is the military-historical school which associates his flying squadrons and airborne artillery with Renaissance battle plans. There is the biographical school which sometimes identifies the devil with Milton himself. There are the psychoanalytic schools which have successfully plucked out the heart of the "mystery of iniquity," diagnosed Satan's malady as acute paranoia, rearmed him in an impressive panoply of Freudian symbols, or reduced him to a collage of Jungian archetypes. There is a legalistic school which insists that the Father of Lies should be taken at his own word until caught in an out-and-out perjury. There is a Pyrrhonist school which, conversely, insists on doubting everything he says until proven demonstrably true. There is a Tom-o'-Bedlam school which invokes the divinity of Milton and devoutly defies the foul fiend. There is a sporting club which cries "Foul play!" and insists that the devil as underdog should be given a reasonable handicap, a decent chance to win. There is a sock-and-buskin club which admires his sublimity as tragic hero or his versatility as comic actor: alternatively *eiron, alazon,* and buffoon-villain. There is even a Gnostic society which endorses his pharmaceutical discoveries and the transcendental wisdom he magnanimously extends.

The issues are far more complex than the simple antinomy—Satanist or anti-Satanist—would suggest. We need an arbiter, surely, even though his ruling might prove hazardous to life and limb. For, in Milton's own words,

. . . *Chaos* Umpire sits,
And by decision more imbroils the fray. . . .

I

The problem of Satan has been complicated by ambiguous terminology. Precisely what do we mean by *hero?* The term itself is equivocal. It possesses very different meanings for a Homeric critic and a Christian theologian, a cultural anthropologist and a schoolboy nurtured on films of space-pioneering and Arizona cattle-rustling. The heroic virtues of the theosophical Platonist or the Aristotelian moralist bear little resemblance to the martial valor celebrated in heroic verse. The arms of the epic warrior are rarely those of the Christian knight. What (we ask ourselves) could the violence and fraud of the ancient pagan heroes possibly mean to the Renaissance religious poet? What use could John Milton make of the classical epics he had been taught to revere as models of structure and style? What had the wrath of Achilles and the wiles of Odysseus to do with the heroic faith and patience of the martyr, the heroic charity of the saint? What (to adapt Tertullian) had Troy to do with Paradise? or the fall of Ilium with the fall of man?

Only by distinguishing and isolating the different senses of *heroism* and *heroic virtue,* and by examining the various ways in which Milton deliberately played these different meanings against one another can we moderns approach a solution to the basic issues underlying the so-called "Satanist" controversy: the precise senses in which the Adversary of Milton's God is truly and not just superficially heroic; and (more significantly) the degree to which the entire portrait is a consciously fabricated illusion—an image of an *eidolon,* a pseudo-hero. The process of moral self-determination—the driving urge toward self-definition that we normally recognize in the heroes of Homeric epic—is equally operative in Milton's Satan, yet (as readers of Saint Augustine will recall) this very preoccupation with self, along with the craving for dominion and the hunger for glory, forms the cornerstone of the infernal city. The Satanic image, as Milton presents it, is (to a degree) the devil's own creation. It is an aspect of the hero's *élan* toward self-definition; and as the artifice of a fallen intelligence, it sometimes wavers between conscious and unconscious de-

Complete Poems and Major Prose, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York, 1957).

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lusion. Like Pandaemonium itself, it is the art of the devil, a "vain imagination."

In part at least, the image of the Satanic hero is conscious pretense. Like his subsequent disguises as stripling cherub, cormorant, toad, and serpent, it is an illusion deliberately fostered by the father of lies; and Satan himself is partly aware of his own deception. In a larger sense, however, the validity of this image depends on our own definition of the heroic, a definition that may, or may not, coincide with Milton's own. By certain criteria, traditional in epic poetry and literary theory, Satan's title to heroic eminence would seem eminently justified. These are not the standards that Milton himself regarded as valid or final, but he expected us to be aware of them, and to compare them with other and higher criteria, just as he expected us to compare the respective merits of Satan and Adam and Christ: his major heroic paradigms. In his portrait of the heroic Archfiend he evoked these standards partly for the sake of epic decorum, inviting comparison with older heroic poetry, but primarily in order to discredit them. By such norms (he was suggesting) the devil himself might seem more praiseworthy than the greatest conquerors celebrated in history and legend. (In actuality, of course, the criteria themselves were fallacious, as illusory as the devil's own pretensions to divinity, and their falsity could best be demonstrated by a *reductio ad absurdum:* the paradox of the devil as hero, the oxymoron of a "godlike" fiend.)

The substance of Milton's critique of epic heroism was neither new nor unfamiliar to his contemporaries. The same classical worthies and their exploits had been alternately extolled as quasi-divine or defamed as diabolical. The classical moralists themselves had anticipated Christian denunciations of Achilles, Alexander, and Caesar as heroized manslayers and deified pirates. To theologians of a later age, the highest virtues of the ancients often seemed little more than splendid vices; the fame they had achieved was, in fact, an apotheosis of villainy. In a fallen world, men of strength had sought fame through infamy; and men of eloquence had glorified inglorious deeds. The novelty of Milton's criticism consisted chiefly in its method rather than in its content.

Perhaps the salient feature of Milton's Satan is that he is not merely a pseudo-hero, praiseworthy only in the eyes of a fallen world and by the standards of a false and secular heroism, but a corrupted hero. The Satanic image is not simply an illusion but a perversion of true heroism. Many of the apparently heroic qualities that the devil displays—contempt of danger, fortitude of mind and body, prudence as adventurer and as leader—are, in fact, morally neutral; they can be, and often have been, exercised for both good and evil ends. In another context, they could have been associated with genuine heroic virtue; the example of the faithful angels is a case in point. Through Satan's alienation from good, these potentially laudable qualities have become depraved; and this depravity is implicit even in his earliest speeches. His subsequent degradation may indeed surprise us (as Milton intended it to do), but it is nevertheless both probable and necessary.

The power of the Satanic image lies partly in its ambiguity, and this springs largely from the ambiguity of heroic virtue itself. Aristotle had defined it as an eminent and extraordinary degree of virtue, Neoplatonists as the virtues of the purified soul, Christian theologians in terms of sanctity. By these definitions the fallen archangel must, of course, forfeit his claim. Nevertheless he could (as he in fact does) boast the privileges of his superior metaphysical status. The heroes of Thebes and Troy were demigods; in the classical schema they usually ranked well below such superior breeds as gods and demons. The fallen angels not only surpass in their "imbodied force" the entire "Heroic Race . . . That fought at *Thebes* and *Ilium*"; they are also the originals and prototypes of the pagan divinities. By nature as well as in strength Satan outranks the demigods of the Greek heroic age. (Most of these, of course, were notable rather for their martial prowess than for the higher virtues. The heroes of Thebes exercised their valor—as did Satan—in a civil war; in one of the besieging leaders—Capaneus, notorious for his pride and his contempt of deity—scholars have recognized a prototype of Milton's Satan.)

The questions raised by Milton's Satanic image have been further complicated, paradoxically, by oversimplification. The issues, as several generations of critics have defined them, are often phrased disjunctively, in an *either-or* pattern that invites debate rather than impartial inquiry. (They remind one of the questions debated in scholastic disputations—or of Hobson's choice.) Is *Paradise Lost* a heroic poem or a divine poem? Are its principal characters to be judged in terms of literary precedents or by ethical norms? Are they, in short, poetic heroes or moral heroes?

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Should poetic heroism be categorically distinguished from ethical heroism? Is Satan the actual hero of Milton's epic, or does this eminence belong rather to Christ or Adam? Is the Satanic image a projection of Milton himself? Is the so-called "heroic" Satan of the earlier books consistent with the "degraded" fiend of the later books? Does the archangel "deteriorate" in the course of the action, or is he arbitrarily "degraded" by the poet? Is Satan, in fact, hero or fool?

Most of these questions are sophistical; they call for categorical answers; but such replies are likely to be inaccurate and misleading, and any valid response must be hedged about with qualifications. If these issues still remain controversial, it is because they have been radically oversimplified and partial truths can still be advanced as arguments on both sides. Instead of attempting to answer them directly, I shall concentrate instead on the functions of the Satanic image in *Paradise Lost* and its relationship to the roles of Adam and Christ in the poem. If we can understand more clearly the role of Satan in the structure of the plot, in the delineation of contrasting ideals of heroic virtue, and in the critique of the epic tradition itself, the questions ought, I think, to answer themselves.

II

The problem of Satan originated in critical perplexity. *Paradise Lost* simultaneously answered and violated the expectations of its audience. In certain respects it faithfully observed the conventions of classical epic as Renaissance critics conceived them; in other ways it appeared to disregard them altogether or indeed to invert them. Milton's earliest readers were understandably puzzled, and some of them disagreed violently on such crucial issues as the genre of his poem, its hero, and its fidelity to the rules of epic poetry. A few of them approached his work with the mingled admiration and dismay a Homeric scholar might experience on first opening Joyce's *Ulysses*.

For the majority of Milton's contemporaries, an ethical intent was implicit in the very definition of the epic genre. The primary function of the heroic poet was to delineate heroic virtue—to depict the *aristeia* of a pattern-hero and thereby move an audience (usually of martial and aristocratic background) to admiration and emulation. Theoretically the higher virtues, whether moral, intellectual, or theological, might be distributed among several different heroes or else united in a single protagonist. Since the traditional epic argument centered upon warfare—successful warfare—the conventional epic virtues normally involved martial prowess. The epic hero must demonstrate his heroism through his military strength and skill. Physical fortitude was thus a *sine qua non,* though it might be combined with other and more amiable qualities: strength of mind as well as body, prudence, magnanimity, temperance, and piety.

Milton explicitly rejected the conventional martial subject in favor of the theme of spiritual combat: the internal warfare conventional in the imagery of St. Paul and Prudentius and elaborated by St. Gregory, Erasmus, and Downame. The core of the poem is a traditional temptation-ordeal, the spiritual *agon* celebrated in Christian morality-plays and in the epic (or drama) of Job. In a well-known passage in Book Nine, the poet defends his unorthodox choice of subject and expresses his personal distaste for a military theme:

> Not sedulous by Nature to indite
> Wars, hitherto the only Argument
> Heroic deem'd, chief maistry to dissect
> With long and tedious havoc fabl'd Knights
> In Battles feign'd; the better fortitude
> Of Patience and Heroic Martyrdom
> Unsung; . . .

He has selected (he claims) a higher argument as "Subject for Heroic Song . . ."—a theme

> Not less but more Heroic than the wrath
> Of stern *Achilles* on his Foe pursu'd
> Thrice Fugitive about *Troy* Wall; or rage
> Of *Turnus* for *Lavinia* disespous'd,
> Or *Neptune's* ire or *Juno's* that so long
> Perplex'd the *Greek* and *Cytherea's* Son; . . .

Despite Milton's protestations some of his critics dismissed his "Subject for Heroic Song" as flagrantly unsuitable for heroic poetry. Others doubted that *Paradise Lost* was a heroic poem at all; the title page had described it, innocuously and ambiguously, as "A Poem." Several commentators debated the identity of the hero and the poem's conformity with the rules of epic narrative. Milton's "subject is not that of an heroic poem, properly so called," Dryden protested. "His design is the losing of our happiness; his event is not prosperous, like that of all other epic works; his heavenly machines are many, and his human persons are but two." Milton would have had a "better plea" as heroic poet "if the Devil had not been his hero, instead of Adam; if the giant had not foiled the knight, and driven him

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out of his stronghold, to wander through the world with his lady errant; and if there had not been more machining persons than human in his poem." [2]

John Dennis acclaimed *Paradise Lost* "as the most lofty, but most irregular Poem, that has been produc'd by the Mind of Man." Milton desired to "give the World something like an Epick Poem; but he resolv'd at the same time to break thro' the Rules of Aristotle." The "Devil is properly his Hero, because he bests the better." [3] Moreover, the "most delightfull and most admirable" part of the poem is that "which relates the Rebellion and Fall of these Evil Angels, and their dismal Condition upon their Fall, and their Consult for the recovery of their native Mansions, and their Original Glory." In order "to introduce his Devils with success," Milton realized that he must "give them something that was allied to Goodness." [4] No passage in Homer (Dennis declared) equalled in sublimity Milton's lines on the dissolution of the Stygian Council:

> Midst came their mighty Paramount, and seem'd
> Alone th' Antagonist of Heav'n.[5]

Addison, on the other hand, endeavored to examine *Paradise Lost* "by the Rules of Epic Poetry, and see whether it falls short of the *Iliad* or *Aeneid,* in the Beauties which are essential to that Kind of Writing." Content to demonstrate its conformity with the principles of this genre, he waived discussion of the question whether it "may be called an *Heroic Poem.*" Critics who denied it this title might call it "a *Divine Poem.*" The heathen could form no higher notion of a poem than the heroic, but "Whether *Milton's* is not of a sublimer Nature" Addison did not presume to determine.[6]

Replying to Dryden's reflection "that the Devil was in reality *Milton's* Hero" and to the correlative objection concerning Adam, that "the Hero in the *Paradise Lost* is unsuccessful, and by no Means a Match for his Enemies," Addison cautiously suggested that both of these objections were irrelevant because *Paradise Lost* was not, in fact, heroic poetry. It was "an Epic, or a Narrative Poem, and he that looks for an Hero in it, searches for that which *Milton* never intended." If one insisted on finding a hero, however, this was surely the Messiah. Milton's Christ was the actual hero "both in the Principal Action, and in the chief Episodes." [7]

Nevertheless Milton's portrait of the fallen archangel was sublime. Satan's entire role was filled with incidents that could elevate and terrify the imagination of the reader. His sentiments (thoughts) in the first book befitted his nature and his character: "a created Being of the most exalted and most depraved Nature." The opening passages of the second book admirably depicted his "superior Greatness" and his "Mock-Majesty." In the magnitude of his voyage, the multitude of his wiles, and the variety of his shapes and semblances, he surpassed Homer's Ulysses.

In his emphasis on the "Absurdity" of Satan's rhetoric and its "Semblance of Worth, not Sub-

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[2] John Dryden, *Of Dramatic Poesy and Other Critical Essays,* ed. George Watson (London and New York, 1962) **2**: pp. 84, 233. For discussion of the criticism of Milton's Satan, see Douglas Bush, *Paradise Lost in Our Time: Some Comments* (Ithaca and London, 1945); Bush, "Recent Criticism of *Paradise Lost,*" *Philol. Quart.* **18** (1949): pp. 31–43; Arthur E. Barker, "'. . . And on His Crest Sat Horror': Eighteenth Century Interpretations of Milton's Sublimity and His Satan," *Univ. of Toronto Quart.* **11** (1942): pp. 421–436; Calvin Huckabay, "The Satanist Controversy of the Nineteenth Century," *Studies in English Renaissance Literature,* ed. Waldo F. McNeir (Baton Rouge, 1962), pp. 197–210; Kenneth A. Bruffe, "Satan and the Sublime: The Meaning of the Romantic Hero," Northwestern Univ. diss., 1964; E. H. Visiak, *The Portent of Milton: Some Aspects of His Genius* (London, 1958); Sister M. Thecla Jamison, "The Twentieth-Century Critics of Milton and the Problem of Satan in *Paradise Lost,*" Catholic Univ. diss., 1952; Mina Urgan, "Satan and His Critics," *English Department Studies, Istanbul Univ.* **2** (1951): pp. 61–81; Joseph A. Wittreich, Jr., *The Romantics on Milton: Formal Essays and Critical Asides* (Cleveland and London, 1970); Merritt Y. Hughes, "Satan Hero?" in: John Milton, *Complete Poems and Major Prose* (New York, 1957), pp. 177–179; *Milton: A Collection of Critical Essays,* ed. Louis L. Martz (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1966), pp. 6–9; John C. Taylor, "A Critical History of Miltonic Satanism," Tulane Univ. diss., 1966. See also the summaries in Calvin Huckabay, *John Milton: An Annotated Bibliography, 1929–1968* (revised ed., Pittsburgh, Pa., and Louvain, 1969).

[3] *Milton: The Critical Heritage,* ed. John T. Shawcross (New York, 1970), pp. 128–129.

[4] Shawcross, pp. 112–113.

[5] Shawcross, p. 239.

[6] Addison did not consistently emphasize this technical distinction between epic and heroic poetry. Like the majority of Renaissance critics, he generally employed them as synonyms; *cf.* his references to "the Language of an Heroic Poem" and "the Language of an Epic Poem."

[7] Shawcross, pp. 147, 158–159, 165–166.

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stance," [8] Addison anticipated the views of Charles Williams, C. S. Lewis, and other twentieth-century critics. Yet he also foreshadowed the objections that C. H. Herford and A. J. A. Waldock would advance concerning the poet's deliberate degradation of Satan in the transformation scene of Book X. Recognizing that his plot was more appropriate for tragedy than heroic poetry, Milton had attempted to remedy this imperfection by publicly mortifying the devil upon his return to hell.[9]

For several later critics, Richard Blackmore, Voltaire, Jonathan Richardson, Samuel Johnson, the hero of *Paradise Lost* was Adam himself, the principal character in the epic.[10]

III

For the neoclassical critics the problem of Satan was inextricably interinvolved with questions of formal regularity—considerations of genre, unity of action, and the identity of the epic hero. Many of them had caught the contagious enthusiasm of Longinus, however; and in their emphasis on Milton's original genius and their admiration for the energy and sublimity of his Satanic portrait they foreshadowed several of the major themes of romantic criticism. Satan came into his own with the romantic poets, but the way had been partly cleared by the neoclassical critics themselves.

Like Addison, several of the romantics perceived the underlying duality of Satan's character; they recognized its depravity as well as its sublimity. For Coleridge, Milton was the "most interesting of the Devil's Biographers," and his Satanic portrait depicted the characteristic qualities of the politician writ large: the "restlessness, temerity, and cunning which have marked all the mighty hunters of mankind from Nimrod to Napoleon." Carefully noting "the intense selfishness, the alcohol of egotism, which would rather reign in hell than serve in heaven," Milton had deliberately sought to "place this lust of self in opposition to denial of self or duty, and to show what exertions it would make, and what pains endure to accomplish its end," but he had also managed to invest this character with "a singularity of daring, a grandeur of sufferance, and a ruined splendour, which constitute the very height of poetic sublimity." [11]

To Hazlitt, Satan seemed "the most heroic subject that ever was chosen for a poem; and the execution is as perfect as the design is lofty." The "first of created beings," Satan aspired to nothing less "than the throne of the universe. . . . His ambition was the greatest, and his punishment was the greatest; but . . . his fortitude was as great as his sufferings. His strength of mind was matchless as his strength of body. . . . His power of action and of suffering was equal." He was "not the principle of malignity, or of the abstract love of evil—but of the abstract love of power, of pride, of self-will personified." His deformity was evident "only in the depravity of his will; he has no bodily deformity to excite our loathing or disgust. . . . Milton was too magnanimous and open an antagonist to support his argument by the bye-tricks of a hump and cloven foot." [12]

Though both of these critics extolled the grandeur of Milton's Satanic image, they did not allow their admiration to obscure their moral judgment. Landor likewise found greater force of energy and "greater force of poetry" displayed in Milton's devil than in Adam, the main character of *Paradise Lost.* Nevertheless, there was "neither truth nor wit . . . in saying that Satan is hero of the piece, unless . . . he is the greatest hero who gives the widest sway to the worst passions." [13]

The case for the alleged Satanism of the romantics must rest, therefore, on different evidence, notably that afforded by Blake and Shelley. The suggestion that Milton himself was an instinctive, though unconscious, citizen of Pandaemonium first occurred in a controversial note in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell:* "The reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels & God," Blake declared, "and at liberty when of Devils & Hell, is because he was a true poet and of the Devil's party without knowing it." [14]

More than a few Miltonists have taken this passage at face value, as a kind of personal testament, and accordingly directed their righteous wrath against romantic heresies in general and Blake in particular. Yet before consigning him to the flames and ice of Milton's hell as an accessory after the fact, we might recall his own warn-

[8] Shawcross, pp. 153, 170–174.
[9] Shawcross, pp. 165–166.
[10] Shawcross, pp. 227–228, 256; *Milton Criticism: Selections from Four Centuries,* ed. James Thorpe (New York, 1969), pp. 56–57, 75–76.
[11] Wittreich, p. 161; Thorpe, p. 95.
[12] Thorpe, pp. 107–109.
[13] Thorpe, p. 368.
[14] Wittreich, p. 35.

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ing against mistaking the voice of a *dramatis persona* for the author's own voice: "You might as well," he declares, "quote Satan's blasphemies from Milton & give them as Milton's Opinions." [15] As Professor Joseph Wittreich observed, Blake's comments on Milton as devil's disciple are uttered by the devil himself, who "speaks as erroneously as the priests whose sacred codes he is assaulting. . . ." [16] In Harold Bloom's opinion, Blake was actually tracing "the declining movement of creative energy in *Paradise Lost.*" He was offering "an aesthetic criticism" of the poem, "not a reading of Milton's intentions." [17]

In a treatise *On the Devil, and Devils* Shelley contrasted the grandeur and energy of Milton's Satan with "the popular personification of evil malignity." As a moral being Milton's devil was "as far superior to his God, as one who perseveres in some purpose which he has conceived to be excellent, in spite of adversity and torture, is to one who in the cold security of undoubted triumph inflicts the most horrible revenge upon his enemy. . . ." The devil owed "everything to Milton. Dante and Tasso present us with a very gross idea of him: Milton divested him of a sting, hoof, and horns; clothe[d] him with the sublime grandeur of a graceful but tremendous spirit—and restored him to the society." Milton "gives the Devil all imaginable advantage: and the arguments with which he exposes the injustice and impotent weakness of his adversary" would, if printed in other than dramatic form, have been answered by persecution. The cruel ruler of heaven had made the devil's own "benevolent and amiable disposition" the instrument of his revenge, turning Satan's "good into evil" and inspiring him "with such impulses, as . . . irresistibly determined him to act what he most abhorred, . . . for ever tortured with compassion and affection for those whom he betrays and ruins." [18]

In the Preface to *Prometheus Unbound,* however, Shelley emphasized the defects of Satan in comparison with his own poetic hero:

> The only imaginary being resembling in any degree Prometheus, is Satan; and Prometheus is, in my judgment, a more poetical character than Satan, because in addition to courage, and majesty, and firm and patient opposition to omnipotent force, he is susceptible of being described as exempt from the taints of ambition, envy, revenge, and a desire for personal aggrandizement, which, in the Hero of Paradise Lost, interfere with the interest. The character of Satan engenders in the mind a pernicious casuistry which leads us to weigh his faults with his wrongs, and to excuse the former because the latter exceed all measure.[19]

Byron ridiculed the demonic artillery of Milton's war in heaven; but, like Dryden, he regarded Satan as the real hero of *Paradise Lost.* The context of his remarks, however, was frequently apologetic or polemical. He appealed to Milton's precedent, as to the example of Aeschylus, to clear his own poetry (notably the drama on Cain) from charges of blasphemy: "Are these people more impious than Milton's Satan? or the Prometheus of Aeschylus?" Milton "certainly excites compassion for Satan, and endeavours to make him out an injured personage—he gives him human passions too, makes him pity Adam and Eve, and justify himself much as Prometheus does. Yet Milton was never blamed for all this." "If Cain be blasphemous, 'Paradise Lost' is blasphemous." [20]

On the whole, the accusation of Satanism leveled against the romantic critics appears to have been exaggerated. In Professor Wittreich's opinion, "The Satanist position . . . is causally . . . related to the neglect" of romantic criticism as a whole.[21] Neither Blake nor Shelley expressed consistent or unreserved admiration for Milton's devil; and in different contexts they expressed different opinions. Each was "forced to make an ethical distinction, and in doing so each judge[d] Satan to be unheroic." [22]

That the romantics were not all of the devil's party is self-evident, and perhaps rhetorical convention—an excessive reliance on synecdoche—has been largely responsible for placing some of them there. Miltonists have been too careless (it would seem) in substituting the whole for the

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[15] Wittreich, p. 34.
[16] Wittreich, p. 98.
[17] Wittreich, p. 98.
[18] Wittreich, pp. 534–536.
[19] Wittreich, p. 531.
[20] Wittreich, pp. 522–523.
[21] Wittreich, p. 5; *cf.* pp. 6–9.
[22] Wittreich, p. 27. For Blake's views on Milton and the Satan of *Paradise Lost,* see Wittreich, "The 'Satanism' of Blake and Shelley Reconsidered," *Studies in Philology* **65** (1968): pp. 816–833; T. A. Birrell, "The Figure of Satan in Milton and Blake," in: *Satan,* ed. Bruno de Jésus-Marie (London, 1951), pp. 379–393. In William Godwin's *Political Justice,* Roger Sharrock recognized probably "the first manifesto of the Satanist school"; "Godwin on Milton's Satan," *Notes and Queries,* n.s., **9** (1962): pp. 463–465. See also Benjamin T. Sankey, Jr., "Coleridge on Milton's Satan," *Philol. Quart.* **41** (1962): pp. 504–508.

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part, and in confusing a distributed with an undistributed term. Nevertheless the Satanism attributed to the romantic critics is an indirect acknowledgment of their originality. Many of the central issues in the Milton scholarship of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were first formulated, or at least foreshadowed, by the romantics themselves. The chief concern of most "anti-Satanists" was not to provide a critique of romanticism, but to refute a widely established view held by their own contemporaries. The heresy must (they assumed) have had a genealogy; and, in accordance with the historical method, they endeavored to trace it to its origin in Byron, Blake, and Shelley. For Hanford, Blake's "proposition" represented "something new in Milton interpretation. It is really quite different in its implications from Dryden's statement that Satan is the hero of *Paradise Lost,* for Dryden is thinking in terms of epic technique, while Blake is declaring that passion and rebellion, typified in Satan, are the vital motives of Milton's poetic inspiration. In so doing, he keenly anticipates the trend of a good deal of subsequent criticism," including that of Sir Walter Raleigh.[23] "Since the romantic age . . . ," Douglas Bush observed, "it has been conventional to regard Satan as the real hero of *Paradise Lost.* We can readily understand how revolutionary poets like Blake and Shelley could make over Milton in their own image; what is less understandable is the persistence of that attitude."[24] For Marjorie Nicolson, it was "with Blake, Shelley, Byron, [that] the 'Satanic School' of Milton criticism began to develop." The "Romanticists, rebels in various ways, . . . sympathized with the fact that Milton, too, had been a rebel, allying himself with the party that put a king to death."[25]

By the end of the eighteenth century the problem of Satan as epic hero, technically heroic because he successfully accomplishes his enterprise, was already obsolescent. The admiration that Addison and Dennis had felt for his sublimity as a poetic character found a sympathetic echo in Hazlitt and Coleridge; it still persists in recent criticism of his heroic energy. His superiority to the grotesque fiends of medieval and Renaissance tradition—a point that had engaged Macaulay—impressed Herford and other twentieth-century commentators. Comparison with classical heroic prototypes has remained a commonplace of Milton criticism since Addison. The problem of the relationship between the poetic character and the personality of the author—the question as to how much of his own feelings and aspirations Milton consciously or unconsciously projected into his creation—originated with the romantic critics; and it has remained a central issue in the "Satanist" controversy ever since.

IV

On the whole, criticism of the Satanic hero has tended to oscillate between extremes. For many neoclassical critics the problem was essentially one of narrative structure and rhetoric. Those who regarded Satan as the hero of the poem did so because the conception and execution of the victorious enterprise were his; he was the hero because he was successful. Those who hailed him as sublime usually based their arguments on the altitude of thought and expression displayed in his various speeches, the magnitude of the great "ideas" that distinguished Milton's portrait of him. Several of the romantics, in turn, and many of their successors shifted the grounds of controversy from narrative role to moral character. Satan was the hero of the poem because of his strenuous pursuit of liberty, and his fortitude and constancy against overwhelming odds. For romantic and neoclassical critics alike, Satan's resemblance to the heroic prototypes of classical antiquity had become a commonplace.

For many of the moderns, finally, the central issues have been the consistency of the Satanic portrait and Milton's command of narrative techniques. In certain scenes the devil appears heroic, in others ridiculous. Which is the *true* Satan—the character that Milton consciously or unconsciously intended? Will the real Prince of Darkness please stand up? "Is the devil an ass?" inquired Musgrove. "Hero or fool?" demanded G. R. Hamilton. Sir Walter Raleigh had raised the same question decades earlier and had left no doubt that in his own eyes (and probably in Milton's as well) the devil was anything but a fool.[26]

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[23] James Holly Hanford, *A Milton Handbook* (fourth ed., New York, 1947), p. 343.

[24] Douglas Bush, "Characters and Drama," in: *Milton: A Collection of Critical Essays,* ed. Louis L. Martz (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1966), p. 111; from *Paradise Lost in Our Time* (Ithaca, 1945).

[25] Marjorie Nicolson, *John Milton: A Reader's Guide to His Poetry* (New York, 1963), p. 186.

[26] G. R. Hamilton, *Hero or Fool? A Study of Milton's Satan* (London, 1944). S. Musgrove, "Is the Devil an Ass?" *Review of English Studies* **21** (1945): pp. 183–

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In the opinion of a later school of critics, conversely, he was anything but a hero. Like their opponents, these "anti-Satanists" sometimes blurred the distinction between literary analysis and polemics; but they effectively challenged a stereotype that many of their predecessors had accepted without question. To their successors, in turn, they left the more onerous burden of defending, revising, or refuting their position. The influence of both parties has varied (it would seem) in inverse ratio to their reticence and understatement.

Recent criticism has centered, in large part, on the artistic integrity and coherence of Milton's Satanic image—on the consistency of the heroic portrait in the early scenes with complementary or contradictory images: the tragic despair voiced in the soliloquy on Mount Niphates, the comic braggadocio of his boasts to unseat the Almighty, the heroic (or mock-heroic) rough-and-tumble of his skirmishes on the plains of heaven, the preference for fraud over force in political and martial strategy, the bestial disguises, the ignominious metamorphosis into a serpent. Several critics see the devil as ridiculous throughout the poem; his apparent heroism is, in their eyes, a facet of the illusion and inaccuracy of hell. Others regard him as an originally heroic figure who gradually degenerates either through his own voluntary commitment to evil or through the conscious malice of the poet himself and the poet's God. For some, the soliloquy of Book IV discredits the heroic image of the earlier books; for others, the reverse is true. For some, the comic transformation in Book X appears logical and inevitable; it is the condign punishment for Satan's crime. In the opinion of other critics, it bears no relationship whatsoever to the heroic archangel of the opening scenes in hell.

The first large-scale offensive against the Satanist position began shortly after the first gunfire of the Second World War. In a preface that C. S. Lewis hailed as "the recovery of a true critical tradition after more than a hundred years of laborious misunderstanding,"[27] Charles Williams challenged the tendency to confuse Satan's views with those of the poet himself. Because Satan felt a sense of injured merit, so ("it is asserted") did Milton. "Perhaps," Williams commented, "but if he did, then he certainly also thought it foolish and wrong." Like Coleridge, Williams emphasized the devil's egotism, his sense of "self-admiration," his "self-loving spirit." He also noted the irony underlying Satan's description of himself in the first two books and, above all, the inaccuracy of his boasts: "Hell is always inaccurate."[28]

In 1942 Lewis himself joined fire. In his opinion, the Satanic predicament—the devil's sense of injured merit—came perilously close to comedy:

> He thought himself impaired because Messiah had been pronounced Head of the Angels. These are the "wrongs" which Shelley described as "beyond measure." . . . No one had in fact done anything to Satan; he was not hungry, nor over-tasked, nor removed from his place, nor shunned, nor hated—he only thought himself impaired.

Satan "lies about every subject he mentions," and it was difficult to "distinguish his conscious lies from the blindness which he has almost willingly imposed on himself." He had, in fact, "become more a Lie than a Liar, a personified self-contradiction." In Milton's devil, Lewis recognized "the horrible co-existence of a subtle and incessant intellectual activity with an incapacity to understand anything." Moreover, his "progressive degradation" had been "carefully marked"—from "hero to general, from general to politician, from politician to secret service agent, and thence to a thing that peers in at bedroom or bathroom windows, and thence to a toad, and finally to a snake."

The success of this portrait (Lewis argued) was largely due to one's own fallen nature; it was much easier to project onself into an evil character than into a good one: "The Satan in Milton enables him to draw the character well just as the Satan in us enables us to receive it. . . . A fallen man *is* very like a fallen angel."[29]

199, detected the symptoms of intellectual decay even in the early books, in spite of the devil's superficial magnificence. See William Empson, *Milton's God* (London, 1961), pp. 30–37, for discussion of the views of Musgrove and Raleigh. Raleigh's *Milton* first appeared in 1900. Earlier still (1859), Walter Bagehot had complained that Milton's "Satan was to him, as to us, the hero of the poem"; Patrick Murray, *Milton: The Modern Phase: A Study of Twentieth-Century Criticism* (New York, 1967), p. 105.

[27] C. S. Lewis, *A Preface to Paradise Lost* (New York, 1961), pp. v–vi.

[28] Charles Williams, "An Introduction to Milton's Poems," in: Thorpe, pp. 258–259; from *The English Poems of John Milton* (London, 1940).

[29] Lewis, pp. 94–101. E. E. Stoll attacked Lewis's interpretation of Satan, in "Give the Devil His Due: A Reply to Mr. Lewis," *Review of English Studies* **20** (1944): pp. 108–124 and "A Postscript to 'Give the Devil His Due,'" *Philol. Quart.* **28** (1949): pp. 167–184. Allan

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Helen Gardner responded to the views of Lewis and Williams by stressing the tragic rather than the comic aspects of the Satanic predicament. As "one re-reads the poem," she suggested, "the exposure of Satan's malice and meanness seems curiously irrelevant. There remains always, untouched by the argument, the image of enormous pain and eternal loss." The "terrible distinction between devils and men lay in the irreversibility of the fall of the angels." They were incapable of repentance and could have no hope of pardon. Though Satan was "in no sense the hero of the epic as a whole," he remained nonetheless a "figure of heroic magnitude and heroic energy." In the reality of his damnation and in his monomaniacal self-concern he resembled the tragic heroes of the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage.[30]

H. Gilbert, on the other hand, defended Lewis's point of view: "Critics of Mr. C. S. Lewis on Milton's Satan," *South Atlantic Quart.* **47** (1948): pp. 216–225. In "Satan is a Problem. The Problem of Milton's 'Satanic Fallacy' in Contemporary Criticism," *Franciscan Studies* **17** (1957): pp. 173–187, Father Amadeus P. Fiore argued that Satan was, in fact, a fool throughout the poem.

In recent years Satan's characterization and his function in the epic narrative have been examined from a variety of angles. Lawrence A. Sasek, "Satan and the Epic Hero: Classical and Christian Tradition," Harvard Univ. diss., 1953, reexamined his role in the light of epic conventions. In "Satan and the Narrative Structure of *Paradise Lost*," in *If By Your Art* (Pittsburgh, 1948), pp. 15–26, Putnam F. Jones argued that the basis of the Satanist controversy was to be found in the narrative structure of Milton's epic. Calvin Huckabay maintained that, despite Satan's dominant position in the early books, the poem is clearly focused on man as its central figure; "Satan and the Narrative Structure of *Paradise Lost:* Some Observations," *Studia Neophilologica* **33** (1961): pp. 96–102. In "The Satan of Milton," *Hudson Review* **12** (1960): pp. 33–59, William Empson reexamined the narrative pattern of Satan's tragedy. Whereas Empson saw Milton's devil as a tragic figure, Jane F. Ford regarded him as a personification of wickedness: "Satan as an Exemplar of Evil in *Paradise Lost*," Univ. of Pittsburgh diss., 1934. Arnold Stein published an essay on "Satan: The Dramatic Role of Evil," *Publ. Mod. Lang. Assn.* **65** (1950): pp. 221–231. Robert C. Fox traced the motivation of his actions to three dominant passions: pride, envy, revenge; "Satan's Triad of Vices," *Texas Studies in Language and Literature* **2** (1960): pp. 261–280. Roger Lejosne saw him as a republican; "Satan Républicain," in: *Le Paradis Perdu: 1667–1967,* ed. Jacques Blondel (Paris, 1967), pp. 87–103. Arnold Williams reconsidered "The Motivation of Satan's Rebellion in *Paradise Lost*," *Studies in Philology* **42** (1945): pp. 253–268.

Several scholars reexamined the sequence of Satanic disguises: Thomas Kranidas, "Satan's First Disguise," *English Language Notes* **2** (1964): pp. 13–15; Jackson I. Cope, "Satan's Disguises: *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*," *Modern Language Notes* **73** (1958): pp. 9–11; Raymond B. Waddington, "Appearance and Reality in Satan's Disguises," *Texas Studies in Language and Literature* **4** (1962): pp. 390–398; William Scheuerle, "Satan the Cormorant," *Thoth* **3** (1962): pp. 18–23. In "O Foul Descent! Satan and the Serpent Form," *Studies in Philology* **62** (1965): pp. 188–196, Mother Mary Christopher Pecheux contrasted his reluctant incarnation in serpent form with the Son's voluntary Incarnation. In "Satan Now Dragon Grown (*Paradise Lost,* X, 529)," *Études anglaises* **20** (1967): pp. 356–369, Merritt Y. Hughes reinterpreted the transformation scene of Book X in the light of the symbolic metamorphoses in classical poetry.

In "Milton's Critique of Heroic Warfare in *Paradise Lost* V and VI," *Studies in English Lit.* **7** (1967): pp. 119–139, Stella Revard recognized an emphasis on the problem of the origin of evil as well as a revaluation of the epic conventions of heroic combat. In the opinion of G. H. Rigter, Milton's Satanic image and his account of the fall of man revealed an inner conflict within Milton himself between reason and emotion; "Milton's Treatment of Satan in *Paradise Lost*," *Neophilologus* **42** (1958): pp. 309–322. Ann Lodge diagnosed Milton's devil as a paranoiac; "Satan's Symbolic Syndrome, A Psychological Interpretation of Milton's Satan," *Psychoanalytic Review* **43** (1956): pp. 411–422. E. H. Visiak, "Milton's Magic Shadow," *Nineteenth Century* **134** (1943): pp. 135–140, perceived in Milton's Satan a projection of the poet's own disillusionment with his former ideals.

[30] Helen Gardner, "Milton's 'Satan' and the Theme of Damnation in Elizabethan Tragedy," in: *Milton: Modern Essays in Criticism,* ed. Arthur E. Barker (New York, 1965), pp. 205–217; from *English Studies,* n.s., **2** (1948). Grant McColley, "Macbeth and *Paradise Lost*," *South Atlantic Bull.* **13** (1938): pp. 146–150 and E. E. Kellett, "Macbeth and Satan," *London Quart. and Holborn Review* (July, 1939), pp. 289–299, detected analogies between Shakespeare's tragic hero and Milton's devil. In "Milton's Satan and the Elizabethan Stage Villain," Duke Univ. diss., 1957, Calvin C. Smith likewise stressed Renaissance dramatic parallels. Robert M. Boltwood compared Satan's role with that of Virgil's Turnus in the *Aeneid;* "Turnus and Satan as Epic Villains," *Classical Jour.* **47** (1952): pp. 183–186. In Milton's account of the archangel's vast size, D. T. Starnes perceived a similarity to a rebellious Titan of Greek mythology; "Tityos and Satan," *Notes and Queries* **197** (1952): pp. 379–380.

In "Satan's Persian Expedition," *Notes and Queries,* n.s., **5** (1958): pp. 389–392, Manfred Weidhorn pointed out analogies between Milton's Satan and Herodotus's account of Xerxes. In *Chariot of Wrath* (London, 1942), G. Wilson Knight argued that Milton's Satanic image reflected the poet's attitudes toward Charles I and Oliver Cromwell. In *Ten Perspectives,* pp. 172–176, Hughes questioned these identifications: "Topical historical allegory gives way altogether when Charles and the Cromwellian force which destroyed him are both seen as ectypes of Milton's Satan." Indeed, the "attribution of any topical political intention to Milton's epic involves irreconcilable hypotheses." Other historical analogies have been noted by William Blisset, who perceived similarities between Milton's archangel and Julius Caesar; "Caesar and Satan," *Jour. History of Ideas* **18** (1957): pp. 221–232.

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The Satanist position, as Douglas Bush paraphrased it, was "in brief that, since God is so unpleasant and Satan is a being of such magnificent vitality, Milton, in spite of his consciously different purpose, must have put his heart and soul into the projection of Satan." The "common fallacy," he observed, "begins with a basic misapprehension" of Satan's first address to his followers. Yet the speech itself was "a dramatic revelation of nothing but egoistic pride and passion, of complete spiritual blindness." In this passage there was "no antinomy . . . between Milton's intention and the result." Though Satan undoubtedly possessed heroic qualities, so did Macbeth; and in the course of the action the archangel degenerated into "a very human villain," a demonic Richard III.[31]

With the polemics of Lewis and Williams the Satanist controversy became something of an exercise in Christian apologetics, but not without justification. At stake were not only Milton's theological and ethical principles but his artistry itself, his conscious control over the materials and design of his poem and over the conduct of its characters. Nevertheless, the antidiabolists had oversimplified the issue. Although they successfully turned the flank of the Satanist position, they were vulnerable to the Parthian shots of their retreating foe. Two of the hardiest refused categorically to retreat. A. J. A. Waldock directed his attack against the poet's craftsmanship. Milton's own "inexperience in the assessment of narrative problems" (he implied) was primarily responsible for the striking inconsistencies in his Satanic image.[32] William Empson, on the other hand, argued that Satan's character was consistent, plausible, and ethically superior to Milton's God. Like their opponents, both of these critics pressed their attacks too boldly and too far; and few Miltonists have dared to follow either argument to its perilous conclusion. For Waldock, the epic was a failure because it was not a good novel. For Empson, it was a success because it lacked a good God.

In rejoinder to Lewis and Williams, A. J. A. Waldock maintained that the changes in Satan's character did "not generate themselves from within: they [were] imposed from without. Satan . . . does not degenerate: he is degraded."[33] Even in the opening books of the epic, this technique of degradation was apparent: There was "hardly a great speech of Satan's," Waldock protested, that Milton did not deliberately attempt to correct, "to damp down and neutralize." "Each great speech lifts Satan a little beyond what Milton really intended, so he suppresses him again (or tries to) in a comment." Even in the early books the poet had betrayed signs of nervousness, and in delineating the subsequent development of this character Milton had introduced, in effect, a different Satan: "It is not merely that the Satan of the first two books re-enters altered: the Satan of the first two books to all intents and purposes disappears; and I do not think that in any true sense we ever see him again." Although the soliloquy on Mount Niphates was a masterpiece, it was nonetheless specious; "the Satan who now begins to unsay all that the other Satan said . . . is a Satan that we have not felt before . . . And now that he is put before us we still cannot see the connection." The true degeneration lay not in Satan himself but in the poet's method. In depicting the angel's final transformation into a serpent, Milton had stooped to "the technique of the comic cartoon." Of course, the scene was amusing, but it proved absolutely nothing about Satan himself.[34] The

[31] Martz, pp. 111–116.

[32] A. J. A. Waldock, "Satan and the Technique of Degradation," in: Martz, p. 77; from *Paradise Lost and Its Critics* (Cambridge, 1947).

[33] Martz, p. 89.

[34] Martz, pp. 77–96. The problem of Satan's degradation had engaged C. H. Herford several decades prior to Waldock's study. In his eyes the inherent contradictions in the poetic character sprang from inner conflicts within the poet himself. In Satan and his companions—"human warriors and counsellors of the grandest type"—Milton's "classic humanism" had found "magnificent, and triumphant expression." Nevertheless the poet's humanistic tastes clashed with his Christian convictions. Fearful lest the devil "be taken for the hero of his great poem," Milton had stripped his glorious Satan of his "noble human form," turned him into a serpent, and pursued him through the later books "with fierce abuse and reproof"; Herford, *Dante and Milton* (Manchester, 1924), pp. 34–35.

For comparison between Milton's Satan and Dante's Lucifer, see Irene Samuel, *Dante and Milton: The Commedia and Paradise Lost* (Ithaca, 1966); Anne Paolucci, "Dante's Satan and Milton's 'Byronic Hero,'" *Italica* **41** (1964): pp. 139–149. For criticism of Milton's Satan in comparison with other literary or theological images of the devil, see David Masson, *The Three Devils: Luther's, Milton's and Goethe's, with Other Essays* (London, 1874); Enrico Spadala, *Tre i principi dei diavoli: Lucifer di Dante, Plutone di Tasso, Satana di J. Milton* (Ragusa, 1937); S. H. Gurteen, *The Epic of the Fall of Man: A Comparative Study of Caedmon, Dante, and Milton* (New York, 1896); Maximilian Rudwin, *The Devil in Legend and Literature* (Chicago, 1931); Edgar F. Daniels, "The Seventeenth Century Conception of Satan with Relation to the Satan of *Paradise Lost*," Stanford Univ. diss., 1952; Max Milner, "Le Satan de Milton et l'épopée

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heroic archangel of the early books completely invalidated the despondent monologuist of Book IV.

Waldock drove a wedge between the poet as dramatist and the poet as glossator. "Milton's allegations *clash* with his demonstrations," he objected, and "in any work of imaginative literature . . . it is the demonstration . . . that has the higher validity." When Milton informs us that the apostate angel was "rackt with deep despare," we must reject his comment, for there has been very little despair in the speech we have "just been listening to."[35] Like Dr. Frankenstein, Milton was apparently unable to control the powerful figure he had created. Waldock's method, ingenious though it was, precluded any direct intrusion of the poet or the poet's God into the story of Satan; in his hands the poem disintegrated into a collection of fragments, crumbling away like an ill-fired jar.

Empson's criticism of Milton's devil cannot be dissociated from his views on Milton's God. His book by that name appeared in 1961, but he had already reached many of his conclusions nearly three decades earlier—several years before the apotropaeic rituals of Williams and Lewis. In a critique of Bentley's emendations to *Paradise Lost,* he had questioned the coherence of the Satanic image. Milton's devil was not a "complex personality," he suggested, but "one plain character superimposed on another quite separate from it." Empson also raised the question of precisely how much Satan really knew concerning the creation of the angels: If the devil honestly regarded God as no more than a "usurping angel," there would (he declared) be "no romantic diabolism" in giving him one's whole-hearted admiration.[36]

In *Milton's God* Empson not only revised his earlier condemnation of the Satanic image as a "dramatic failure," but produced several new and ingenious arguments for its consistency. In passages that other critics had dismissed as lies or empty vaunts, he discovered evidence of the devil's sincerity and plausibility. Satan's thought and actions (he suggested) were not as a rule ridiculous in themselves; they were logical in the context of his limited and uncertain knowledge concerning the nature and powers of his divine enemy.

In sharp contrast to Lewis and Williams, Empson argued that Satan's revolt against an omnipotent creator was not *per se* absurd; for in the devil's own eyes the divine adversary was *not* almighty. Satan doubted not only that God had created the angels, but that He could in fact create *any*thing. From the very beginning of the poem the devil sincerely believes that he has disproved God's omnipotence.[37] Not until he questions

romantique française," in: *Le Paradis Perdu: 1667–1967,* ed. Jacques Blondel (Paris, 1967), pp. 219–240; Ursula Müller, *Die Gestalt Lucifers in der Dichtung vom Barock bis zur Romantik* (Berlin, 1940); Edward Langton, *Satan, a Portrait. A Study of the Character of Satan Through All the Ages* (London, 1946; New York, 1947); Roland Mushat Frye, *God, Man, and Satan: Patterns of Christian Thought and Life in Paradise Lost, Pilgrim's Progress, and the Great Theologians* (Princeton, 1960).

[35] Martz, p. 86.

[36] William Empson, "Milton and Bentley: The Pastoral of the Innocence of Man and Nature," in: Martz, pp. 28–30; from Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral* (1935).

[37] The issue of Satan's heroism or folly in warring against an invincible foe had (as Empson observed) been raised by Sir Walter Raleigh: his "very situation as the fearless antagonist of Omnipotence makes him either a fool or a hero, and Milton is far indeed from permitting us to think him a fool"; William Empson, *Milton's God* (London, 1961), p. 37. Williams, on the other hand, found in Satan's allusions to his revolt against the Almighty clear evidence of the essential "inaccuracy" of Hell: Satan "goes on to say of the Omnipotence that he and his followers 'shook his throne'; it is only afterwards that we discover that this is entirely untrue. Milton knew as well as we do that Omnipotence cannot be shaken; therefore the drama lies not in that foolish effort but in the terror of the obstinacy that provoked it, and in the result; not in the fight but in the fall;" Thorpe, p. 258. Waldock, in turn, objected that Williams had completely missed "the narrative impressions that Milton is striving after in these books." Certainly Milton knew that Omnipotence could not be shaken; "and for that very reason he must do his best as a narrative poet . . . to make us forget the fact, must try . . . to instil into us the temporary illusion that Omnipotence *can* be shaken—until such time, at least, as he has his poem properly moving and Satan securely established in our imaginations as a worthy Antagonist of Heaven"; Martz, pp. 78–79.

Empson's criticism, in turn, shifted the grounds of the controversy to Satan's doubts concerning God's omnipotence. More recently, William B. Hunter, Jr. noted that "throughout *Paradise Lost* Satan does not really believe in God's omnipotence and bows before him only because he has been beaten in battle." Moreover, all of his acts "imply denial of God's omnipresence and omniscience as well"; "The Heresies of Satan," in *Th' Upright Heart and Pure: Essays on John Milton Commemorating the Tercentenary of the Publication of Paradise Lost,* ed. Amadeus P. Fiore, O.F.M. (Pittsburgh, 1967), p. 26.

In fomenting the angelic rebellion of Book V (Empson maintained) Satan was "talking standard republican theory." Milton employed the parallel not to "to make republicans absurd, but to make Satan more plausible." Although the poet was "conscious of the danger of tyranny from a politician who starts off like Satan," he nevertheless portrayed the angel as "a deeply conscientious republican"; Empson, *Milton's God,* pp. 74–77.

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Uriel about the creation of the world, does Satan realize that he is not self-generated (as he had formerly believed) and that he is opposing an all-powerful adversary.

In Empson's opinion, the successive changes in Satan's character constituted one of the principal merits of the poem. Though critics had erred in regarding him as completely evil from the start, they had correctly recognized his moral absurdity and his progressive degeneration. These, however, redounded less to Satan's dishonor than to the discredit of the deity who had ruthlessly degraded him.[38]

With Empson, as with Lewis and Williams, the routine maneuvers of literary controversy served to disguise the realities of a more basic conflict: a holy war in which the essential issue was theological doctrine rather than literary fiction. At stake was religious rather than poetic faith. (Milton's Satan, as Professor Lewis saw him, would not have seemed out of place in *The Screwtape Letters* or *The Great Divorce*. One might easily picture the assiduous Wormwood taking down the great infernal harangues in sulphuric shorthand.) Like Luther, C. S. Lewis and his party could hurl defiance and inkpots at the devil with greater vehemence because they believed their adversary to be safely leashed and tethered by a higher power. Empson's admiration for Milton's devil, on the other hand, sprang largely from his strong dislike for Milton's God; and this in turn reflected a personal antipathy toward the deity of orthodox theological tradition.[39]

In the crossfire between the devil's party and the servants of Milton's God, the reader may well wonder what has happened to the unity and coherence of the poem. Can it survive this siege of contraries; or will it, like heaven itself, go to rack and ruin in the civil conflicts of warring Angels? For all its magnitude, the epic seems altogether too small to accommodate Milton's Satan and Milton himself, and far too narrow to contain both the devil and Milton's God. Fortunately, the majority of recent critics have been unwilling to reduce Satan to a simple formula—hero *or* fool, comic *or* tragic—and they have usually attempted to mediate between the extreme positions of Lewis and Waldock. Some of them have explored the contrasting ideals of heroism implicit in the character and the very structure of the poem. In the antithetical roles of Satan and the Messiah they recognize an ideological (as well as a historical) conflict between secular and divine criteria of the heroic. Others have analyzed the mixture of truth and falsehood, logic and sophistry, in the rhetoric of hell. Since the earlier debates over the "inaccuracy" of the fallen angels, problems of characterization have usually involved questions of logical coherence and style. Increasingly skeptical of ethical generalities and formulas, contemporary scholarship tends to avoid categorical redefinitions of Satan's character and to explore instead the implicit ambiguities of the text. Nevertheless, as Patrick Murray observed in a survey of recent studies of *Paradise Lost*, "Much of the criticism of Milton's Satan is strongly reminiscent of the Shakespearean criticism of Bradley, who tended to examine the characters of Shakespeare's plays as if their existence were independent of the works in which they appeared." When "isolated from his background in the epic and viewed as an independent entity," Satan may "arouse admiration"; but if seen, "as Milton actually presents him, against the background of the whole poem, then his heroic qualities, presented in their evil context, appear far less admirable."[40]

Milton Miller[41] called attention to the "double

For the theological concepts underlying Milton's Satan, see Robert H. West, *Milton and the Angels* (Athens, Georgia, 1955); Donald R. Howard, "Milton's Satan and the Augustinian Tradition," *Renaissance Papers* (Columbia, S. C., 1954), pp. 11–23; Allan H. Gilbert, "The Theological Basis of Satan's Rebellion and the Function of Abdiel in *Paradise Lost*," *Modern Philology* **40** (1942): pp. 19–42; C. A. Patrides, "Milton and His Contemporaries on the Chains of Satan," *Modern Language Notes* **73** (1958): pp. 257–260; Patrides, "The Salvation of Satan," *Jour. of the History of Ideas* **28** (1967): pp. 467–478.

[38] Empson, *Milton's God*, pp. 36–90. For Empson's views on the attitudes of Blake and Shelley toward Milton's images of God and Satan, see pp. 13, 17–24.

[39] See Empson, *Milton's God*, p. 251. In this context Empson's slogan "Back to Shelley" (p. 17) is not inappropriate; for in both instances the sympathetic admiration for the Satan of *Paradise Lost* was partly conditioned by hostility toward Satan's divine adversary as Christian orthodoxy—as well as John Milton—had depicted Him. Observing that "The writer who would have attributed majesty and beauty to the character of victorious and vindictive omnipotence" might be "a good Christian" but never "a great epic poet," Shelley questioned whether Milton was, in fact, "a Christian or not, at the period of composition of *Paradise Lost*"; Wittreich, p. 535.

[40] Patrick Murray, *Milton: The Modern Phase. A Study of Twentieth-Century Criticism* (New York, 1967), p. 112.

[41] Milton Miller, *"Paradise Lost:* The Double Standard," *Univ. of Toronto Quart.* **20** (1951): pp. 183–199.

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standard" of heroism implicit in the poem and contrasted the heroic virtue of the fallen angels with the self-sacrificial role of the Messiah, a role "above heroic." W. B. C. Watkins noted the "imagery of fear and horror" with which Milton invested the figure of the archfiend. As he journeyed "about the universe, tarnished but still magnificent," Satan carried with him the terrible secret of his own incestuous offspring, Sin and Death and their brood of hellhounds. In the early books he had been "a magnificent hero-villain," but Milton had "already made clear a planned deterioration." The soliloquy on Mount Niphates represented a "supreme moment of self-recognition" rather than a contradiction in character.[42]

In the opinion of Marjorie Nicolson, the greatness of Milton's Satanic portrait lay "not only—indeed not primarily—in the depiction of the majestic character of Books I and II, but in the slow and steady degeneration of an angel who once stood next to God Himself in Heaven." Milton's basic technique in portraying this process of degeneration was "a subtle change in figures of speech, mutation of the images to which Satan is compared."[43] Distinguishing between "Satan's character (his moral bent) and Satan as a character (as an agent in a story)," John S. Diekhoff recognized the devil's energy and magnificence, but also stressed his actively perverse will: "Milton undertakes to prove that Satan is responsible for the introduction of evil into the world and that he is hateful because he is evil." In Diekhoff's view, Satan's portrait is convincing and carries "the illusion of reality": "As an agent in *Paradise Lost* he performs that part of the action which the story imposes upon him without apparent inconsistency of character." His "actions accord with his *ethos*"; Satan "was a very bad angel, and Milton knew it."[44]

To M. M. Mahood, the Renaissance "problem of heroism" was essentially "an intensification of the humanist dilemma," and in the Satan of *Paradise Lost* she recognized an exemplar not only of false heroism but also of that "self-sufficient humanism which perverted the mind from attaining its true heroic magnitude" and which entered the world with the fall of man. The angelic revolt was directed "to the same ends as the revolt of a false humanism" and consequently "displays all the irony of the humanist dilemma, whereby those who have rebelled in the name of a misconceived liberty end by denying that they have any freedom of action."[45]

In contrast to Waldock, B. A. Wright emphasized the consistency of Milton's Satanic image. The soliloquy on Mount Niphates provided "a moment of truth," bringing into "focus all that has happened" and enabling us to "view it in true perspective." The quality of Satan's heroism was apparent in his choice of evil as good; like Macbeth, the devil recognized his situation but did "not relent." As epic farce the battle of the angels ridiculed warfare in general as well as the traditional epic ideal of winning glory through arms. While Milton's own view of Satan and his angels remained essentially unchanged, he nevertheless altered the points of view from which he presented them. It was not "that the heroic figure of the earlier Books is deliberately degraded by the poet . . . but that his mind and character are unfolded more and more fully by being seen in different circumstances and from different points of view."[46]

For Merritt Y. Hughes, Satan appeared heroic only in the first two books of the epic. Even in these scenes, however, Milton had depicted the devil as an archetypal tyrant through skillful allusion to stereotypes of Asiatic despotism. The weakness of the Satanic portrait was indeed its very greatness: "its power to fool readers into its own delusion of power and make them say that Milton's Satan is a noble anticipation of the Nietzschean superman."[47]

John Peter called attention to the "incoherent logic" of Satan's opening speech and branded his rhetoric as "opaque and self-deluding."[48] John Shawcross censured him as a "vacuous orator" and a "caricature of the pompous braggart." The devil's "glorious" speeches exhibited "the false high style" of the "dissembler and buffoon." Satan

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[42] W. B. C. Watkins, "Creation," in: Martz, pp. 139–145; from *An Anatomy of Milton's Verse* (1955).

[43] Nicolson, pp. 186–187.

[44] John S. Diekhoff, *Milton's Paradise Lost: A Commentary on the Argument* (New York, 1963), pp. 28–48; first published in 1946.

[45] M. M. Mahood, *Poetry and Humanism* (New York, 1970), pp. 211–225; first published in 1950.

[46] B. A. Wright, *Milton's Paradise Lost* (London, 1962), pp. 126–127, 129, 131, 145.

[47] Merritt Y. Hughes, "Satan and the 'Myth' of the Tyrant," in: *Ten Perspectives on Milton* (New Haven and London, 1965), pp. 165–195; John Milton, *Complete Poems and Major Prose,* ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York, 1957), pp. 177, 179.

[48] John Peter, *A Critique of Paradise Lost* (New York, 1960), p. 43.

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implicitly denied the divine omnipotence, and a "comic element" was apparent in his very self-deception.[49] Harold Toliver commented that "Satan's 'high words' in Book I reveal a typical confusion of heavenly and infernal values as they substitute political style for genuine homage to truth, yet draw upon that homage at strategic moments for the satanic sense of an epic program welding a nation of heroes." Satan's language rendered "all apparent realities in a literal manner and yet is inaccurate and veiled"; it substitutes "shadowy motives for the self-sufficient reason of the Logos." [50]

Stanley Fish stressed the role of the Satanic image in compelling the reader to redefine his own preconceptions of the heroic; because Satan's "courage is never denied . . . while his virtue and goodness are . . . , the reader is led to revise his idea of what a true hero is." In "an important way epic heroism, of which Satan is a noteworthy instance, is the antithesis of Christian heroism, and a large part of the poem is devoted to distinguishing between the two and showing the superiority of the latter." [51] The devil's false heroism (Fish suggested) "draws from the reader a response that is immediately challenged by the epic voice, who at the same time challenges the concept of heroism in which the response is rooted." The character of Satan did "not change at all" between Books I and VI, and his alleged degradation was merely a "critical myth." On the contrary, it was the "reader's capacity to see him" that actually changed, even though that change was "gradual and fitful." [52]

Frank Kastor, in a recent book, approached the problem of Milton's consistency from a different angle—the "pattern of Satanic characterization" common in literary tradition:

> Put simply, Satan is a trimorph, or three related but distinguishable personages: a highly placed Archangel, the grisly Prince of Hell, and the deceitful, serpentine Tempter. . . . Usually the roles are unified by a single consciousness, but it is by no means uncommon to find the roles separated into distinctly separate characters.

In the light of this tradition (Kastor believes) "the perception of different levels and kinds of characterization in Milton's Satan by Waldock and the others seems entirely accurate." [53]

Although psychoanalytical approaches to the problem of Satan fall outside the mainstream of Milton criticism, they provide some of its more interesting eddies and counter-currents. In 1934 Maud Bodkin reexamined the devil's epic image against the background of Jungian theory. Although she did not directly raise the problem of consistency in characterization, she nevertheless recognized a pattern of conflicting archetypes. At the commencement of the poem (she suggested) the reader views the Satanic portrait "under the devil archetype as enemy of group values," regarding him abstractly and with abhorrence from without. Yet within a few lines the detached and initially hostile audience becomes "one in aspiration with Satan, the hero." In the earlier books of the poem "Satan appears as a Promethean figure. The theme of his heroic struggle and endurance against hopeless odds wakens in poet and reader a sense of his own state as against the odds of destiny." In the latter books, however, Satan is "no longer Promethean hero," but, once more, the "abhorred enemy of God and man, insulted and humiliated by the poet." In

> the figure of Satan as hero, . . . an objective form is given to the self of imaginative aspiration, or to the power-craving, while the overthrow of Satan, and his humiliation as infernal serpent satisfies the counter movement of feeling toward the surrender of personal claims and the merging of the ego within a greater power.

Like Lascelles Abercrombie (1922), Miss Bodkin regarded Satan as a "supernatural hero," who (like the "superhuman" hero of epic tradition) nevertheless symbolized human existence. For Abercrombie, Satan's unyielding agony had epitomized the "antinomy of modern consciousness"—the conflict between irresistible destiny and the unbroken human will. Miss Bodkin, on the other

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[49] John T. Shawcross, "The Style and Genre of *Paradise Lost*," in: *New Essays on Paradise Lost*, ed. Thomas Kranidas (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1971), pp. 15–33; first published in 1969. Tracing the "basis of the so-called Satanic interpretation" to critical assumptions that, since the poem is an epic, it must necessarily contain "a hero of noble status or virtue" and depict heroic achievements, Shawcross argued that there was, in fact, "no hero in the poem although Adam and Eve constitute a protagonist as representatives of Mankind in the drama of life."

[50] Harold E. Toliver, "The Splinter Coalition," in: Kranidas, pp. 34–57.

[51] Stanley E. Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost* (London and New York, 1967), pp. 48–49, 162.

[52] Fish, "Discovery as Form in *Paradise Lost*," in: Kranidas, pp. 1–14.

[53] Frank S. Kastor, *Milton and the Literary Satan* (Amsterdam, 1974), pp. 15, 72.

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hand, perceived in Milton's devil an underlying "conflict between passionate self-assertion and religious loyalty"—a conflict that dominated the poet's own mind, and, "finding a reflection in his poem," activated "the same factors in a like-minded reader." Under one aspect

> Satan expresses the spirit of man resolute against the overwhelming might of Destiny, in the other he appears as infernal serpent, symbol of lust and hate, threatening values felt as both human and divine. The alternations of sympathy and aversion that the poem's construction secures for the central figure of Satan determine corresponding aspects of the image, within the poem, of God, Satan's antagonist.[54]

In an essay "The Devil and Dr. Jung" Robert Martin Adams stressed the weaknesses in the Jungian approach to Milton's devil. Nevertheless he recognized Miss Bodkin's distinctive contribution to the problem of Satan's consistency. Like other critics she had accepted "the traditional division between the splendid figure of the first two books and the degraded villain of the later books"; but (unlike most of her predecessors) she had argued that "precisely this variance, this transition from high to low estate" made Satan a tragic hero. Unfortunately (Adams objected) this argument blurred the important distinction between primary and secondary characters. From the same premises one could just as easily demonstrate that Hamlet's uncle was the tragic hero of Shakespeare's play. Claudius was not, of course, "central to the drama, as a tragic hero should be. And so with any reading of Milton's epic which puts Satan at the center of it."

Adams likewise perceived difficulties in Werblowsky's views on the Satan-Prometheus parallel. In actuality the similarities between these figures amounted to little "more than this, that they are antagonists of the reigning deity who excite a measure of admiration. Their enmity for the deity is founded on different motives and expressed in different ways."[55]

The majority of our own contemporaries are neither "Satanists" nor "anti-Satanists." As a rule they profess far more respect for Milton's artistry than many of their predecessors; and they are much more likely to emphasize the inner coherence and consistency of his characterization—its unity in variety—than its discontinuity. They generally take Milton's control of his narrative for granted; he knew what he was really about. Instead of a technique of fission, they usually prefer a method of reconciliation, seeking larger conceptual frameworks capable of synthesizing the contrasting images of Satan and the disparate levels of demonstration and comment with other more fundamental contrasts within the epic. The apparent discrepancies in Satan's character belong, in their view, to a more basic pattern of conflict.

Where earlier critics perceived inadvertent contradictions, the "moderns" usually recognize a carefully calculated dialectic of contraries. Instead of inconsistencies in characterization, they generally stress complementary modes of presentation or perception, deliberate contrasts between appearance or reality, or the interaction between divine and human perspectives. Their primary concern is the quest for a critical frame of reference which can include, without manifest discomfort, the poet and his *persona,* his dramatic characters—and the indispensable reader.

V

As the most recent phase of the Satanist controversy has centered primarily on characterization, especially consistency in character, and only secondarily on narrative role,[56] it would be helpful to recall the successive images of the devil in the order in which Milton presents them. Satan is not only the first dramatic speaker in the poem; he is also a superb orator, and the power of his oratory has shaped the course of Milton criticism no less than the destinies of the fallen angels. Before introducing him into the scene, however, the

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[54] Maud Bodkin, *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry: Psychological Studies of Imagination* (London, 1963), pp. 232–246; first published in 1934. See also Lascelles Abercrombie, *The Epic: An Essay* (London, 1922), pp. 101, 105.

[55] Robert Martin Adams, *Milton and the Modern Critics* (Ithaca, 1966), pp. 35–59; first published in 1955. *Cf.* R. J. Zwei Werblowsky, *Lucifer and Prometheus: A Study of Milton's Satan* (London, 1952); Robert R. Pelletier, "Satan and Prometheus in Captivity," *Notes and Queries,* n.s., 7 (1970): pp. 107–108. Werblowsky's book contained an introduction by Carl Jung himself. In addition to analogues in Greek tragedy, one should also note affinities between Satan's character and that of Seneca's tragic personages. In contrast to Greek tragedy, where "there are no villains" (Moses Hadas suggested), the "Senecan villains are sinful, for they know the better and do the worse. And the sins are not a thing destined in the order of the universe but in defiance of that order"; Moses Hadas, *Hellenistic Culture: Fusion and Diffusion* (New York, 1972), p. 56.

[56] In hailing Satan as hero of Milton's epic, Dryden based his argument largely on the devil's role in the narrative structure; Shelley, on Satan's moral character.

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poet has briefly related in his own voice the story of the Adversary's revolt and fall—a voice inspired by the Heavenly Muse. The first mention of the devil occurs significantly not in the proposition of the epic (there the poet's emphasis falls on the contrasting roles of the First and Second Adams) but in response to a question Milton has demanded of his celestial patroness: What *cause* had moved Adam and Eve to disobey? "Who first seduc'd them to that foul revolt?" The Muse's answer, of course, is Satan:

> Th' infernal Serpent; hee it was, whose guile
> Stirr'd up with Envy and Revenge, deceiv'd
> The Mother of Mankind; what time his Pride
> Had cast him out of Heav'n, with all his Host
> Of Rebel Angels, by whose aid aspiring
> To set himself in Glory above his Peers,
> He trusted to have equall'd the most High,
> If he oppos'd; and with ambitious aim
> Rais'd impious War in Heav'n and Battle proud
> With vain attempt.

This is the first characterization of Satan in the epic, and it is Milton's own. While it emphasizes such motives as ambition and pride, envy and revenge, there is no perceptible suggestion of Satan's heroism. The next description of character—again in the poet's own voice—stresses the fallen archangel's "obdurate pride and steadfast hate" in spite of his "huge affliction and dismay." At this point, however, Satan himself begins to speak and act; and, for many readers, this image of the heroic Satan contradicts not only the earlier characterization but also the Satanic images of the later books. The "fixt mind," the "unconquerable Will," the "courage never to submit or yield"—these are clearly heroic *topoi;* but, if one examines their context closely, one will find them associated with the very motives and passions that Milton had stressed in his earlier summary of Satan's character.

The dominant impression that most readers have received from this portrait is the image of a *virtù* above heroic: the reassertion of a seemingly unconquerable energy in thought and speech and action. In the larger context of these scenes, however—the providential framework of Milton's narrative—one recognizes the limitations of Satan's activity. Only by divine permission is he allowed to play this active role; except for the "sufferance of supernal Power" he would have remained chained forever on the burning lake; and there would have been no opportunity at all to exercise heroic energy or initiate heroic enterprises. In the midst of these heroic orations, the poet reaffirms the overruling control of providence:

> So stretcht out huge in length the Arch-fiend lay
> Chain'd on the burning Lake, nor ever thence
> Had ris'n or heav'd his head, but that the will
> And high permission of all-ruling Heaven
> Left him at large to his own dark designs,
> That with reiterated crimes he might
> Heap on himself damnation, while he sought
> Evil to others, and enrag'd might see
> How all his malice serv'd but to bring forth
> Infinite goodness, grace and mercy shown
> On Man by him seduc't, but on himself
> Treble confusion, wrath and vengeance pour'd.

The Satan of the first book is a spirited commander who successfully rallies his defeated troops, restores them to military discipline by putting them on parade, and oversees the foundation of a new kingdom and the construction of a new capital. In the second book he is simultaneously monarch and parliamentarian, strategist and space explorer. He alone has plotted the overthrow of man; he alone undertakes the perilous voyage "In search of this new world"; and in the course of his expedition he has presence of mind to form strategic alliances with the sinister forces he encounters on the way: Sin and Death, Chaos and ancient Night. These will become tragically operative in the fallen world.

In the third book he assumes the first of his tactical disguises; in seeking directions, he poses as a "stripling Cherub" intent on glorifying the Creator in His works. Like Odysseus, Satan is no less clever at impersonation than at espionage; and he readily adapts "cover-story" and disguise to the needs of the occasion. Once he is within the walls of Paradise, he will appropriately select animal forms. Though his critics usually regard these bestial disguises as symbols of his progressive degeneration,[57] they are also evidence of his

[57] In advancing this interpretation, C. S. Lewis overlooked the primary objection that could be urged against it—that after sinking from angel to toad to serpent in prosecuting his revenge, Satan once again resorts to angelic shapes for his journey back to Pandaemonium. Sin and Death encounter him disguised "in likeness of an Angel bright" steering between Sagittarius and Scorpio. Subsequently he makes his way secretly through his own infernal metropolis "In shew plebeian Angel militant. . . ." He selects animal disguises in Eden, where they will attract less attention than angelic forms; but reverts to angelic shapes after quitting the earthly Paradise. His choice of disguises is motivated by practical considerations, though they also possess a symbolic significance of which he is not always aware; *cf.* Waddington, *supra.* In reverting to angelic shapes and ultimately to his own

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prudence, and his fraud. Disguised as an angel of light, he is no less "the fraudulent Impostor foul" than when he is masquerading as lion or cormorant, serpent or toad.

The Satan of the fourth book is sometimes regarded as a different character altogether, or else as the real Satan, stripped of his pseudo-heroic mask. In his opening soliloquy he acknowledges that the true motives of his rebellion were "Pride and worse Ambition." He confesses that he has seduced his fellow-rebels, vainly boasting that he could "subdue/ Th' Omnipotent." In contrast to the Stoic constancy and fortitude that he had displayed in hell:

> The mind is its own place, and in itself
> Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n[,]

he realizes that he has brought his dungeon with him:

> Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell;
> And in the lowest deep a lower deep
> Still threat'ning to devour me opens wide,
> To which the Hell I suffer seems a Heav'n.

In the eyes of many critics the Satan of this soliloquy is a tragic figure, but no longer the heroic archangel of the earlier books.

Ironically the devil's first glimpse of mankind and the earthly Paradise (in Book IV) does inspire him with admiration; contrary to his own expectations, the pretext of the false cherub who had lied to the sharp-sighted Uriel becomes, to this extent, real. Even at this point he is still capable of feeling compassion for his victims, and he excuses himself with a Machiavellian *topos*—political necessity, the tyrant's plea:

> And should I at your harmless innocence
> Melt, as I do, yet public reason just,
> Honor and Empire with revenge enlarg'd,
> By conquering this new World, compels me now
> To do what else though damn'd I should abhor.

It is in this book that, disguised as a toad, he makes his first assault on Eve, poisoning her dreams with hunger for forbidden knowledge. Detected by the angelic guard and warned by heaven itself, he recognizes the limitations of his strength and the decay of his visible glory. For the first time since his expulsion from heaven, he takes flight. The two following books relate the story of the revolt of the angels as a "terrible Example" of the "reward/ Of disobedience." Thinking himself "impair'd" by the Messiah's elevation as "King anointed," the archangel successively plots rebellion, poses as "Idol of Majesty Divine," skirmishes with Abdiel and Michael, and invents the cannon. In the course of battle he is wounded and—now gross with sinning—experiences pain for the first time. Finally, after hurling puns and linked thunderbolts and wooded hills at their enemies, the rebel hosts lose courage, strength, and resistance before the victorious progress of the Messiah and throw themselves desperately into the abyss.

In these scenes critics have perceived further evidence of Milton's degradation of Satan, and it is still debatable whether the angelic battles were intended to be heroic or mock-heroic. For Addison, these skirmishes were a conscious imitation of combats in classical epic; in the eyes of later critics, they are rather a critique of heroic warfare. The "jaculation dire" of hills encountering hills echoes Hesiod's account of the battle between Titans and giants, but it has also suggested the slapstick of custard pies. The sardonic jests of the angelic combatants recall those of Homeric warriors, yet to many readers they seem merely comic; Addison and Pope were not alone in scoffing at Milton's puns.[58] On the plains of Troy

form, Satan has not managed (as he had expected) to put off the serpent altogether; the shape in which he had sinned follows him back to hell. Though he regards his bestial disguises as temporary expedients—and transformation itself as a process easily reversible at will—he cannot discard the serpent's skin altogether. Either physically or spiritually, it has become a part of himself. His predicament is roughly analogous to that of a Renaissance warlock unexpectedly trapped in his animal shape and unable to repossess at will his original human form.

[58] Shawcross, p. 158; E. E. Kellett, "The Puns in Milton," *London Quart. and Holborn Review* **159** (1934): pp. 469–476. Lord Byron and W. L. Bowles shared the distaste that earlier critics—Voltaire, John Clarke, Charles Leslie—felt for Milton's introduction of artillery into heaven; Wittreich, pp. 520, 527; Shawcross, pp. 117, 255–256, 264. Despite his disapproval of the angelic puns, Addison praised Milton's fidelity to the grandeur of his subject, and Dennis regarded the scene as infinitely more sublime than Homer's battle of gods and heroes; Shawcross, pp. 191–195, 237–239. Like Voltaire, modern readers have tended to view Milton's battle of the angels much as Addison regarded Claudian's fragmentary gigantomachia: certain "Ideas" therein savored "more of Burlesque than of the Sublime"; Shawcross, p. 192. Whereas Voltaire and other neoclassical arbiters usually attributed Milton's apparent lapses from both taste and grandeur as accidental, recent critics have regarded them as intentional. Arnold Stein has argued that the episode is an "epic comedy"—"Milton's War in Heaven—An Extended Metaphor," *English Literary History* **18** (1951): pp. 201–220—and B. A. Wright (*supra*) has labeled it an "epic farce."

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the convention of epic ridicule—the grim sarcasms directed at dying men—can become terrible; it is "black humor," the humor of the *Galgenlieder.* On the plains of heaven, where the contestants are immortals, one is apt to overlook its potentially tragic aspects. The angelic battles seem mock-heroic primarily because they are essentially and consistently ironic; they conclude inevitably (as Milton's deity himself had intended) in a stalemate unforeseen by either the faithful or unfaithful troops.

Though neither party is aware of their true nature, the combats are in reality a kind of war game, a military exercise; and their actual purpose is no less moral than martial education. Providing occasions for illustrating heroic virtues or splendid vices, they test fidelity as well as valor. Otherwise they are vain; and indeed the primary significance of these battle scenes lies in their inconclusive results. Through their very futility, their obvious vanity, they serve, by contrast, to glorify the power of the Father in the Son. In this episode, as in the main plot of his epic, Milton deliberately juxtaposes the merits of the creature with those of the Creator; and this comparison is scarcely less significant for men than for angels. The celestial war is more than an *exemplum* of disobedience; it reinforces by analogy the doctrine of the "vanity of human merits." Yet in the context of Milton's own milieu, the background of the English civil wars and the eventual failure of the Good Old Cause, the episode may suggest other implications: recognition of the ultimate vanity of the fratricidal religious wars and a reaffirmation of apocalyptic hopes in the Second Coming, the Messianic advent in glory and power.[59]

In the Ninth Book Satan returns to Paradise, hidden in mist, conceals himself in the sleeping serpent, and, in a masterly oration, persuades Eve to disobey the divine command. In the following book he overhears, but does not fully comprehend, the sentence of doom pronounced literally on the serpent and allegorically on himself. After appointing Sin and Death as plenipotentiaries and vicegerents over the fallen world, he returns to hell in disguise, and reveals himself to his peers,

> . . . clad
> With what permissive glory since his fall
> Was left him, or false glitter: . . .

After reporting his victory he awaits the "universal shout and high applause" of his audience, but to his own amazement he hears, instead,

> On all sides, from innumerable tongues
> A dismal universal hiss, the sound
> Of public scorn; . . .

The infernal capital is now a snake pit, and its house of peers a society of serpents. Satan finds little leisure to wonder at this change, however; transformed into a "monstrous Serpent," he has greater cause to marvel at his own alteration: a "greater power" has punished him "in the shape he sinn'd,/ According to his doom."

This is our last direct view of Satan and his enterprise. Not until the final lines of the poem will Adam learn the full meaning of the judgment pronounced cryptically and obliquely on his foe. At his first advent, Christ the Second Adam—the woman's seed—"Shall bruise the head of *Satan,*" and "crush his strength," defeating Sin and Death by his passion and resurrection. Ascending to heaven, he will surprise

> The Serpent, Prince of air, and drag in Chains
> Through all his Realm, and there confounded leave; . . .

Finally, at the very end of time, he will come again in glory "to dissolve/ *Satan* with his perverted World."

VI

Milton's technique of characterization is essentially kaleidoscopic: a sequence of dramatic images of the devil in counsel or action, interspersed with proleptic or retrospective allusions and with moral commentary. Insofar as these Protean images introduce seemingly inconsistent aspects of Satan, they compell the reader to undertake the arbiter's burden of comparison and revaluation: to reinterpret the imaginative visions in the light of sober judgment. The character of the devil assumes different aspects in the eyes of his followers and in those of the loyal angels, in his own sight and in that of God.[60] They also vary, however, with

[59] For the apocalpytic element in Milton's poetry see Michael Fixler, *Milton and the Kingdoms of God* (London, 1964); Fixler, "The Apocalypse within *Paradise Lost,*" in: *New Essays on Paradise Lost,* ed. Thomas Kranidas (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969), pp. 131–178; Leland Ryken, *The Apocalyptic Vision in Paradise Lost* (Ithaca, 1970).

[60] From the beginning of his revolt Satan appears ridiculous in the eyes of God and His Messiah; but in the eyes of Michael, the greatest of the loyal angels, he has caused too much misery to be merely a subject for laughter. The resolution of the tensions between comic, tragic, and heroic elements in the celestial war depends ultimately on the antithesis between total and partial vision,

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the demands of the plot, the primary responsibility of the poet.

Insofar as the epic action must seem probable or necessary, springing directly from the character and thought of the dramatic *personae* themselves, Milton's problem in characterizing Satan was one of motivating the devil's attempt against man and somehow making the transition from the archangel who had sought equality with God to the serpentine tempter of Eve seem poetically and logically consistent. The inner coherence of the Satanic image depends not only on the plausibility with which this transition is described, but also on continuity of motivation and heroic image. As adversary of God and man, Satan plays complementary but frequently contrasting roles. In the final analysis, the apparent contradictions were implicit in Milton's subject matter, in the Biblical and exegetical traditions he was exploiting; but in a poetic fable that aspired to epic unity they might easily suggest discontinuity in character. Milton could rationalize them, could endeavor to make them appear probable or necessary, either through stressing Satan's *internal* degeneration after his fall or though emphasizing the altered *external* situation of the fallen angels and its influence on changes in the devil's strategy and tactics. Although the fall affects Satan's character, it also alters his opportunities for successful action and his choice of ends and means. The reader may easily mistake a shift in tactics—a resort to animal disguises, a preference for covert guile over open force—as evidence of moral degeneration, or *vice versa.*

In the final pages of this study we shall reconsider the nature of Satan's roles as antagonist of immortal God and mortal man; the continuity between these roles in character and motivation; analogies with classical and Renaissance prototypes of the hero; and (lastly) the interrelationships between heroic image and theological *ethos,* between the *virtù* and energy of the flesh and the internal reality of spiritual death.

VII

Although Milton explicitly stresses the causal and thematic relationships between the fall of the angels and the fall of man, there are striking divergences as well as parallels between Satan's roles on the two occasions. In heaven he wars against an adversary infinitely superior to himself in strength and wisdom; in Eden he selects more vulnerable opponents, directing his offensive not against angels and archangels but against naked primitives patently inferior to himself in strength and intellect and ultimately focusing his attack on a single unsuspecting woman. The fallen angel has apparently lost whatever scruples he had formerly held concerning the conventions of honorable combat and the choice of a worthy antagonist. (Ironically, in a different sense of the word, it is Satan rather than Adam or Eve who is the unworthy antagonist. In the state of innocence the latter possess a native worth and virtue that their stronger and wiser adversary has lost.) On the first occasion Satan is deceived by his own presumptuous hope (*hybris*); on the second he is driven by despair. Earlier he had warred by force; subsequently by fraud. In the first instance he incurs ignominious defeat; in the second, he wins a dishonorable victory.

The Satan of the first books of *Paradise Lost* is, in a sense, a transitional figure between the aspiring rebel against God and the sly seducer of mankind. Milton has left him much of his original brightness and his original archangelic form; and in character and rhetoric, as well as in external shape, he bears a closer resemblance to the hybristic Lucifer of the celestial war than to the Mafia figure he will subsequently become. Rhetorically Satan continues to exhort his troops to war against God, even though he adapts his arguments to their changed situation. He continues

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the inevitable discontinuity between the Creator's view and that of his creatures.

In Raphael's narrative of the angelic war, Satan's role becomes identified with the origin of discord, rebellion, civil war—and (more specifically) with the invention of that "devilish engine" the cannon. Michael rebukes him as the cause of evil and destroyer of peace:

> Author of evil, unknown till thy revolt,
> Unnam'd in Heav'n, now plenteous, as thou seest
> These acts of hateful strife, hateful to all,
> . . . how hast thou disturb'd
> Heav'n's blessed peace, and into Nature brought
> Misery, uncreated till the crime
> Of thy Rebellion?

The primary emphasis in this episode, however, falls on the inability of the faithful angels to expel evil and restore peace and order to heaven. Michael's threat remains unfulfilled until the advent of the Messiah:

> . . . But think not here
> To trouble Holy Rest; Heav'n casts thee out
> From all her Confines. Heav'n the seat of bliss
> Brooks not the works of violence and war.
> Hence then, and evil go with thee along,
> Thy offspring, to the place of evil, Hell. . . .

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to glory in his role as antagonist of deity; and this part will lead logically and inevitably to his later role as adversary of man. The ambition and envy that he has displayed in heaven are constants in his enterprise against man. Other motives in his assault on man—the implacable hatred and craving for revenge exhibited in the first speeches in hell—spring directly from the humiliating defeat of his earlier enterprise. The Satan of Book I is essentially the fallen Lucifer, the archangel ruined; by the end of Book I one can already perceive in the heroic leader the lineaments of the future serpent.

Through all the changing images of the archangel, whether hybristic or desperate, there remains one controlling motive (and it is vital for his narrative role in the epic action): the unshakable will to glory and dominion, even though the pursuit of glory may involve acts of infamy and though the quest for dominion may entail positive enslavement to his own evil will. Associated with pride and envy, and subsequently with revenge, it spurs Satan's revolt against the Messiah and his enterprise against man. The ambition that prompted his rebellion in heaven still goads him in hell:

> Here we may reign secure, and in my choice
> To reign is worth ambition though in Hell:
> Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heav'n.

and in his soliloquy on Mount Niphates:

> Evil be thou my Good; by thee at least
> Divided Empire with Heav'n's King I hold
> By thee, and more than half perhaps will reign;
> As Man ere long, and this new World shall know.

In both instances the driving ambition is not the less real for its association with despair nor for Satan's condemnation of his own ruling passion. Hitherto he has disguised his desperation with eloquence; but in his solitude on Niphates he gives vent for the first time to his private thoughts. In a sense he is a more impressive figure at this moment of tragic self-recognition than in the heroic defiance of the initial scenes in hell; indeed it is only in the light of the soliloquy that one clearly perceives the real greatness of his performance on earlier occasions—the strength of character required to create and maintain the public image of an undaunted leader, unshaken by defeat. The Satanic *persona* of the early books was a heavy mask indeed, and no less an actor—or *hypokritēs*—than an archangel could wear it.

The greatness of the soliloquy on Niphates belongs to a different order; it is the pitiless insight of the fallen archangel into his own nature, and into the true causes of his fall, that enables us to realize the magnitude of his tragedy, admiring the nobility of the angelic intelligence even in its ruin. Thrice in the course of this speech Satan alludes to his own ambition:

> . . . how glorious once above thy Sphere;
> Till Pride and worse Ambition threw me down
> Warring in Heav'n against Heav'n's matchless
> King: . . .

> O had his powerful Destiny ordain'd
> Me some inferior Angel, I had stood
> Then happy; no unbounded hope had rais'd
> Ambition.

> While they adore me on the Throne of Hell,
> With Diadem and Sceptre high advanc'd
> The Lower still I fall, only Supreme
> In misery; such joy Ambition finds.

Denied grace and unwilling to sue for it, deprived of hope, of fear, of remorse, of "all Good," Satan has nothing left except the ambition that had ruined him. His pursuit of a new kingdom is the ambition of a desperado.

The Satanic portrait is consistent not only in motivation and in the moral judgments that the poet or his divine *personae* pronounce on this character, but also in the continuity and coherence of the heroic mask itself. The heroic vaunt, the concealment of fear or despair, the sense of injured merit, the pursuit of revenge, the resentment of superior authority, the jealousy of rivals—these are familiar traits in many of the heroes of classical and Renaissance epics. "Love and Ambition," in Davenant's opinion,

> are too often the raging Feavers of great mindes. Yet Ambition (if the vulgar acception of the Word were corrected) would signifie no more than an extraordinary lifting of the feet in the rough ways of Honor, over the impediments of Fortune; and hath a warmth (till it be chaf'd into a Feaver) which is necessary for every vertuous breast.

Ambition is indeed "a fault," Hobbes replied, but it nevertheless "has somewhat Heroique in it, and therefore must have place in an Heroique Poem." [61]

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[61] *Sir William Davenant's Gondibert*, ed. David F. Gladish (Oxford, 1971), pp. 13, 50. In *Novum Organum* (Dick, p. 539) Bacon distinguished three kinds or grades of ambition in mankind: Those who "desire to extend their own power in their native country" exhibit a "vulgar and degenerate" kind of ambition. Those who "labour to extend the power of their country and its dominion among men" possess "more dignity, though no less covetousness." Nobler and more wholesome is the

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Achilles was "not a perfect hero," Dryden observed, "nor so intended by the poet." Nevertheless he was "perfect in the strength of his body, and the vigor of his mind. Had he been less passionate, or less revengeful, the poet well foresaw that Hector had been killed, and Troy taken, at the first assault." His "choler and obstinate desire of vengeance" were indubitably vicious, but it was his courage that the epic presented for imitation, "not his pride and disobedience to his general, nor his brutal cruelty to his dead enemy, nor the selling of his body to his father." Homer had characterized his hero not only as foremost among the Greeks in strength and courage but also as a man "of so fiery a temper, so impatient of an injury" that he openly insulted his king and general. Tasso's Rinaldo was a "man of the same temper." "You see," Dryden concluded,

how little these great authors did esteem the point of honour, so much magnified by the French, and so ridiculously aped by us. They made their heroes men of honour; but so as not to divest them quite of human passions and frailties, they contented themselves to show you what men of great spirits would certainly do when they were provoked, not what they were obliged to do by the strict rule of moral virtue.[62]

Milton does, to be sure, portray the devil's disillusionment with his own ruling motive. ". . . such joy Ambition finds," he declares on Mount Niphates. And again, on choosing the instrument of his victory: "But what will not Ambition and Revenge/ Descend to? . . . Revenge, at first though sweet,/ Bitter ere long back on itself recoils." The love of glory and dominion and the study of revenge are too deep-seated, however, to be eradicated even by this sense of present and future misery; and the Adversary's new self-hatred becomes inextricably interwoven with his old self-love.

VIII

Although Satan has suffered miseries on the throne of hell, he has not lost his lust for a throne. In endeavoring to extend and strengthen his dominion by annexing the newly created world, he not only undertakes heroic labors—the voyage through chaos, the espionage mission across the frontiers of light, the penetration of enemy territory under constant surveillance and patrol—but voluntarily stoops to roles that seem in his own eyes ignominious and humiliating. The bestial disguises seem ignoble, but they are (he believes) the only means of avoiding detection. His flight from Gabriel may look like cowardice, but it is also good sense if he really intends to complete his enterprise successfully. Having read his lot in the celestial scales, he knows the futility of seeking a decisive victory by force. Flight and fraud are, for the time being, the only feasible recourse.

Despite the gradual shift in tactics from violence to cunning, Satan's controlling motive and his grand design remain essentially unaltered; and on his second advent he is successful. Having failed on a former occasion to overcome an omnipotent adversary by force, he has apparently scored a victory against an omniscient foe through guile. Singlehandedly he has completed the first world conquest with no other armaments than an apple, and with no wounds or casualties except the threat of a future bruise. In comparison with the exploits of later conquerors and destroyers, his achievements would seem "above heroic," in spite of the base instruments he has chosen.

The Satanic image is, to be sure, the portrait of a false heroism, an *eidolon* of the true heroic virtues. The seemingly heroic constancy with which the devil prosecutes his enterprise springs (as his own oratory reveals) from a renewed dedication to evil. Like the infernal kingdom itself, his strategy is founded on unrelenting opposition to the divine will; it is a part of the dynamic interplay of contraries—good and evil, order and

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ambition (if it may be truly called such) "to establish and extend the power and dominion of the human race itself over the universe," restoring "the empire of man over things" through the arts and sciences. Satan's ambition would fall under the first two categories; but it is with an ambition roughly analogous to the third that he seduces Eve.

As an incentive to great achievements, ambition could be greatly evil as well as greatly good. Bodin found in the love of glory a stimulus that might compel a man to acts of destruction but that could also lead him beyond these deeds of violence to nobler pursuits: "the more noble each man is, the further he disassociates himself from the level of the beasts, and little by little he is carried forward by eagerness for glory, so that he may eclipse the rest. From this comes the lust for domination and the violence inflicted upon the weak. Hence, also, come the discords, wars, slavery, and massacres. But this kind of life is turbulent and full of danger, an empty glory which cannot satisfy a man of lofty soul; as a result a man naturally well endowed is gradually carried over to activities of moral and intellectual excellence, which earn true praise and lasting fame"; Jean Bodin, *Method for the Easy Comprehension of History,* tr. Beatrice Reynolds (New York, 1966), pp. 29–30.

[62] Watson **1**: pp. 163–165; **2**: pp. 185–186, 228.

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disorder, light and darkness—that the deity will exploit in the interests of his own providential dialectic and that Milton himself will utilize both in structuring his plot and in developing its moral implications. The Satanic hero is both anti-hero and pseudo-hero: a foil to the heroism of the Son of God, but also the archetype of a familiar secular heroism that the poet will condemn as spurious.[63] The aesthetic, as well as the didactic, value of the Satanic *eidolon* depends, in part at least, on its consistency. It is both traditional and false, and the poet must represent it consistently under both lights, juxtaposing the authority of divine judgment with the authority of human tradition, the testimony of the eternal Word with the poetry of the ancient Gentiles.

Though the contrasting facets of the Satanic image, the ambitious archangel, the subtle serpent, were implicit in Milton's Biblical sources, he was compelled to fuse them into a consistent and coherent character and to make the transition from one aspect to another seem probable or necessary. In the opening scenes in hell, force and fraud are both presented as viable alternatives. (The formula *aut vi aut dolo* had long been a commonplace in military and political theory as well as in poetic and historical literature, and it is hardly surprising that the fallen angels should invoke this formula in their counsels.) In heaven itself Satan resorts to guile as well as to violence, inventing a pretext to withdraw his forces to his own domain, opening his artillery fire under pretext of truce and concealing his new weapons to hide the fraud. In hell he conceals his despair; and on Mount Niphates—"Artificer of fraud"—he masks his passions under "saintly shew." Hypocrisy and guile are latent, and frequently patent, in his character from the beginning. He enters Paradise as a spy, and here external circumstances alone make his resort to ruse and disguise both probable and necessary if he is to complete the mission for which he has volunteered.

His passage from the infernal capital to Eden necessarily entails a shift in roles, from the undaunted leader to the wily spy; but he has, in effect, merely exchanged one heroic mask for another. The sense of injured merit and the pride in his own strength are reminiscent of Achilles and Ajax and Turnus. The address reminding his warriors of their former prowess recalls Caesar's harangue to his troops on invading Italy. Both Aeneas and Odysseus had displayed similar concern for the sufferings of their companions; and the former had, like Satan, endeavored to find new territories for their settlement. After quitting Pandaemonium, however, Satan's role becomes increasingly suggestive of the Odyssean model, as he adapts his behavior and his *persona* to new and perilous situations. At Hell-gate, open defiance of the infernal warders yields to wily blandishments. During a voyage more hazardous than those of Odysseus and the Argonauts he files his tongue to win the favor of the dangerous powers of the void. Like Odysseus he undertakes a mission of espionage, penetrates hostile territory in ignominious disguises, and plots the fall of a kingdom by trickery.

Like Odysseus, he is also a skillful orator; and, as the Odyssean mask gradually merges through successive animal disguises into that of the serpent, the craft of the sophistic rhetorician and the guile of the snake become one. The insinuating braid of the serpent foreshadows the oblique *insinuatio* with which the tempter begins his seduction of Eve.[64] Although etymological specula-

[63] *Cf.* Cornelius Agrippa's judgment of the heroes of ancient history, in *De incertitudine et vanitate scientiarum et artium:* "as for those who so much extol . . . Hercules, Achilles, Hector, Theseus, Epamino[n]das, Lysander, Themistocles, Xerxes, Cyrus, Darius, Alexander, Pyrrhus, Hannibal, Scipio, Pompey, and Caesar—what have they done but described the greatest and most furious thieves and robbers in the world? True, they were great generals: yet, they were the worst and wickedest of men"; *Renaissance Philosophy,* ed. and tr. Herman Shapiro and Arturo B. Fallico (New York, 1969) 2: p. 78. Davenant declared that the sanctity of the ancient pagans was honor, "and their Honor only an impudent courage or dexterity in destroying"; Gladish, p. 10. In Book IV, Milton juxtaposes the heroic motif of ambition and the pastoral commonplace of content, by first presenting Adam and Eve to us through Satan's eyes. In this scene he not only undercuts the *topos* of heroic ambition by associating it with the devil, but also undercuts common notions of high and base condition, hero and swain. The true heroic virtue belongs to the primitive gardeners contented with their rural seat. In sharp contrast to Milton, Davenant represented contentment itself as a vice (Gladish, pp. 13–14): "good men are guilty of too little appetite to greatnesse, and it either proceeds from that they call contentednesse (but contentednesse when examin'd doth meane something of Lasynesse as well as moderation) or from some melancholy precept of the Cloyster."

[64] In *The Advancement of Learning* Bacon refers to "Imaginative or Insinuative Reason" as the subject of rhetoric; *Selected Writings of Francis Bacon,* ed. Hugh G. Dick (New York, 1955), pp. 330–331. For *insinuatio* (the oblique or "subtle" approach) as one of the two kinds of exordium in classical rhetoric, see *Ad C. Heren-*

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tion concerning the heroic status of orators and sophists could reinforce the devil's pretensions to heroism, his role is (of course) an ironic perversion of the idealized conceptions of the orator and his art as expressed by Cicero and Quintilian and elaborated by Renaissance humanists:[65] the orator as *vir bonus* and public benefactor; and the art of rhetoric itself an instrument of ethics and politics, a means for securing the public good and preserving the public safety. The striking contrast between the humanistic ideal of oratory and the devil's abuse of rhetoric in the cause of tyranny is implicit in Milton's allusion to the orators of *"Athens* or free *Rome."*

Satan's literary affinities are not, of course, restricted to Homer and Virgil. He has been compared with the Capaneus of Statius and Dante, with Lucan's Caesar,[66] with Ariosto's Rodomonte

nium De Ratione Dicendi, tr. Harry Caplan (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1954), pp. 11–13, 21, 29, 169; Cicero, *De Inventione,* tr. H. M. Hubbell (London and Cambridge, Mass., 1949), pp. 42–51; *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian,* tr. H. E. Butler (4 v., London and New York, 1921) *2*: pp. 27–33. According to *De Inventione,* "Insinuation is an address which by dissimulation and indirection unobtrusively steals into the mind of the auditor"; it should be used when "there is something scandalous in the case" ("si aut inest in ipsa causa quaedam turpitudo"). By the "Direct Opening" (*principium*), according to the *Rhetorica ad Herennium,* the orator makes his audience "well-disposed or attentive or receptive" by straightforward methods; by the *insinuatio* or "subtle approach" he effects "all these results covertly, through dissimulation." In scandalous cases ("in turpi causae genere"), according to Quintilian, certain rhetoricians "would have the orator on such occasions insinuate himself little by little into the minds of his judges, especially when the features of the case which meet the eye are discreditable, or because the subject is disgraceful or such as to meet with popular disapproval, or again if the outward circumstances of the case are such as to handicap it or excite odium."

In his first description of the serpent (in Book IV), Milton had juxtaposed two different denotations of *insinuatio*—physical and moral—utilizing the former sense as the vehicle or emblem of the latter:

> . . . close the Serpent sly
> Insinuating, wove with *Gordian* twine
> His braided train, and of his fatal guile
> Gave proof unheeded . . .

In the scene of Eve's temptation he continues to interweave the two senses, but he reinforces them with the rhetorical sense of *insinuatio*. The temptation begins, in fact, with the mute rhetoric of gesture, proceeds with a "Proem" celebrating Eve's "Celestial Beauty" and the divine worship it merits, continues with a false explanation of the serpent's miraculous speech, and—only after further acrobatic and verbal insinuations—continues with a direct challenge to the divine command: "Queen of this Universe, do not believe/ Those rigid threats of Death; ye shall not Die." Satan insinuates himself into Eve's favor by subtlety of movement as well as of words. To attract her attention, he moves with "tract oblique/ At first, as one who sought access, but fear'd/ To interrupt." Having "of his tortuous Train/ Curl'd many a wanton wreath in sight of *Eve,*/ To lure her Eye," he stands before her "as in gaze admiring" and fawns upon her with flattering but mute gestures. After this silent *insinuatio* he proceeds to the verbal stage of his "fraudulent temptation," with a Proem that likewise follows the subtle rather than the direct approach—obliquely suggesting rather than immediately asserting the false miracle and laying the foundation for his victory over Eve by implanting the notion of godhead in her thought. The serpentine tangles which make "intricate seem straight" are emblematic of the devil's oratory as well as his characteristic guile. His oblique exordium to his principal harangue—the powerful exhortation in lines 679–732—is all the more effective for the rhetorical pretense that there has been no exordium at all: that the serpent is carried away by righteous indignation and begins, like some ancient orator, in the height of passion, "as no delay/ Of Preface brooking through his Zeal of Right." (For *indignatio* as "a passage which results in arousing great hatred against some person, or violent offence at some action," see *De Inventione,* pp. 151–157.)

[65] See Joseph A. Wittreich, Jr., "'The Crown of Eloquence': The Figure of the Orator in Milton's Prose Works," in: *Achievements of the Left Hand: Essays on the Prose of John Milton,* ed. Michael Lieb and John T. Shawcross (Amherst, 1974), pp. 3–54; John Steadman, *Milton's Epic Characters: Image and Idol* (Chapel Hill, 1968), pp. 258–259, 322. Bodin regarded oratory as one of the four pillars of the state (*Method,* p. 32): "Human society is held together chiefly by the arts of a general, by jurisprudence, by oratory, and by faith." Sallust had praised the pursuit of glory and patriotic duty through words as well as arms: "It is glorious to serve one's country by deeds; even to serve her by words is a thing not to be despised; one may become famous in peace as well as in war." Since man is linked with the gods through his mind, and with brutes through his body, in seeking glory and renown he ought to "employ the resources of the intellect rather than those of brute strength"; *Sallust,* tr. J. C. Rolfe (London and New York, 1920), pp. 3, 7.

[66] Though Satan's ambition and insatiable pursuit of glory through war resemble Lucan's characterization of Julius Caesar, the analogy applies rather to the leader of the angelic rebellion (who, unlike Caesar, is unsuccessful) and to the "heroic" archangel of Books I and II than to the fraudulent seducer of mankind. In his expertise at dissimulation the later Satan bears a closer resemblance to Tiberius Caesar than to Julius. *Cf.* Lucan's description of Julius Caesar: "Caesar could no longer endure a superior. . . . [H]is energy could never rest, and his one disgrace was to conquer without war. He was alert and headstrong; his arms answered every summons of ambition or resentment; he followed up each success and snatched at the favour of Fortune, overthrowing every obstacle on his path to supreme power, and rejoicing to clear the way before him by destruction";

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and Tasso's Argante,[67] and with European stereotypes of the Oriental despot.[68] As rebellious peer he plays a role analogous to that of the Percys and other intriguing barons in the Yorkist-Lancastrian conflicts. In character, however, he bears a closer resemblance to another arch-conspirator, the courageous and insidious Cataline.[69] As unscrupulous invader and destroyer, he shares traits with the Carthaginian general Hannibal as Silius Italicus had described him:

> By nature he was eager for action and faithless to his plighted word, a past master in cunning, but a strayer from justice. Once armed he had no respect for Heaven; he was brave for evil and despised the glory of peace, and a thirst for human blood burned in his inmost heart.[70]

Lucan, *The Civil War,* tr. J. D. Duff (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1969), p. 13.

Lucan's condemnation of Caesar and Alexander as ambitious blood-letters and destroyers of freedom, his indictment of civil war as an unnatural crime, and his dispraise of martial valor exercised in a guilty cause foreshadow Milton's representation of a false heroism, his image of superhuman strength and cunning perverted to an evil end. In Book I of the *Pharsalia,* Nigidius Figulus the astrologer prophesies "the madness of war"; the "power of the sword shall violently upset all legality, and atrocious crime shall be called heroism." ("Inminet armorum rabies, ferrique potestas/ Confundet ius omne manu, scelerique nefando/ Nomen erit virtus"; Lucan, pp. 50–51.) In Book II Nature reverses "the laws and ordinances of life" and, "while the hurly-burly bred monsters, proclaimed civil war" ("Indixitque nefas"); Lucan, pp. 56–57. In contrast to Pompey's reluctance (Book VII) to join battle and precipitate a "day of universal destruction" and his awareness that "The act of fighting will never bring either reproach or glory to me" ("Pompei nec crimen erit nec gloria bellum"), Caesar stakes the question of guilt or justice on the actual outcome of the battle. In a bloodthirsty harangue he foresees "rivers of blood," "nations weltering in unlimited carnage," and a glorious destiny for himself: "I am the man, who, when the fighting is over, will have power to give away all that now belongs to nations and kings"; Lucan, pp. 374–391):

In describing the *aristeia* of Scaeva, a soldier in Caesar's army (Book VI), Lucan develops the motif of solitary valor—the "one-man" *topos* subsequently elaborated in the heroic poetry of Milton and Dryden: "But though Fortune with a thousand squadrons combined and all Caesar's might could not make good the post, one man snatched it from the conquerors and forbade its capture." "Fortune sees a new pair meet in combat—a man against an army." (At the conclusion of the angelic war Milton converts this motif into a theophany, as the Son of God singlehandedly vanquishes the rebel host. Elsewhere, however, he adapts it to less martial contexts: to the verbal polemics of the loyal angel Abdiel and to the "one just man" in successive scenes from Old Testament history, defending the cause of truth against a perverse world.) Nevertheless, for all his courage, Scaeva is fighting in an unjust cause; and, like Satan, he is a vicious hero: "ready for any wickedness, he knew not that valour in civil war is a heinous crime" (Lucan, pp. 314–319):

> Pronus ad omne nefas et qui nesciret, in armis
> Quam magnum virtus crimen civilibus esset.

And here, finally, is Lucan's verdict on that "Felix praedo" Alexander of Macedon, "that fortunate freebooter, cut off by a death that avenged the world" (Lucan, pp. 590–593):

> The limbs that should have been scattered over the whole earth they laid in a hallowed shrine; Fortune spared his dead body, and the destiny of his reign endured to the last. For if Freedom had ever made men their own masters again, his body would have been preserved for mockery—a man who was born to teach this bad lesson to the world, that so many lands may obey one lord. . . . he was a pestilence to earth, a thunderbolt that struck all peoples alike, a comet of disaster to mankind.

Or, in Milton's own words, one of the manslayers lauded as great conquerors, gods and patrons of mankind, but "Destroyers rightlier called and Plagues of men."

[67] For analogies between Satan and Argante (or Argantes), see Edward Weismiller, "Materials Dark and Crude: A Partial Genealogy for Milton's Satan," *Huntington Library Quart.* **31** (1967): pp. 75–93.

[68] *Cf.* Hughes, "Satan and the Myth of the Tyrant," cited *supra.*

[69] For Cicero's denunciation of Catiline's *furor* and *effrenata . . .audacia,* see *Selected Orations and Letters of Cicero,* ed. Harold W. Johnston (Chicago, 1892), p. 79. For the history of Catiline's conspiracy and Cicero's role in suppressing it, see pp. 21–39. In *The War with Catiline,* Sallust acknowledges the conspirator's heroic qualities as well as his depravity: "Lucius Catilina, scion of a noble family had great vigour both of mind and of body [magna vi et animi et corporis], but an evil and depraved nature. From youth up he revelled in civil wars, murder, pillage, and political dissension. . . . His body could endure hunger, cold and want of sleep to an incredible degree; his mind was reckless, cunning, treacherous, capable of any form of pretence or concealment. Covetous of others' possessions, he was prodigal of his own; he was violent in his passions. He possessed a certain amount of eloquence, but little discretion. His disordered mind ever craved the monstrous, incredible, gigantic [Vastus animus immoderata, incredibilia, nimia alta semper cupiebat]"; Sallust, pp. 8–11.

In *The Advancement of Learning* (Dick, p. 372), Bacon refers to Catiline's "protestation . . . to set on fire and trouble states, to the end to fish in droumy waters, and to unwrap their fortunes: *Ego si quid in fortunis meis excitatum sit incendium, id non aqua sed ruina restinguam.*"

[70] Silius Italicus, *Punica,* tr. J. D. Duff (London and Cambridge, Mass., 1934) **1**: pp. 6–9, "Ingenio motus avidus fideique sinister/ is fuit, exsuperans astu, sed devius aequi./ armatus nullus divum pudor; improba virtus/ et pacis despectus honos; penitusque medullis/ sanguinis humani flagrat sitis."

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The splendid vices that Satan shares with the kings and warriors of classical epic and history [71] also link him with other conquering heroes whose pretenses to heroic virtue were far more questionable: men of violence like the glory-seeking giants among the descendants of Cain, and ambitious tyrants like Nimrod.[72] Yet he also bears a clear, though limited, resemblance to more benign models of the hero: to founders of cities and empires, to voyagers and discoverers of new lands, to culture-heroes and inventors of arms and arts. As the discoverer of gunpowder and inventor of the cannon, he anticipates discoveries that Bacon and LeRoy would regard as of revolutionary importance; and perhaps he might qualify for the divine honors that antiquity bestowed (as Bacon observed) upon the "authors of inventions." [73] In this case also, however, the heroic standard is ambiguous, and Milton subverts it by applying it to an instrument of destruction rather than production, and to an inventor who is a malefactor rather than a benefactor of mankind. In an epic centered on forbidden knowledge, Baconian images and commonplaces could reinforce Milton's portraits of the false intellectual hero as well as the true.[74] In the context of the revolt of the angels and the seduction of Eve, Bacon's *experimenta lucifera* and *fructifera* [75] acquire ironic implications, though one is not altogether convinced that Milton intended them.

On the whole, most of the literary or historical parallels to Milton's archangel are significant rather as types than as specific sources or as consciously intended allusions. As types they recur, moreover, even more frequently in political history than in epic literature, and a systematic search for such parallels would surely be self-defeating. The mask of the devil is composite, and the Satanic image is, on the whole, *sui ge-*

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[71] In the eyes of Renaissance humanists, both history and poetry provided moral and political *exempla* that served as instruments of persuasion as well as instruction. In Bodin's opinion, the greatest "benefit of historical books" was that "some men, at least, can be incited to virtue and others can be frightened away from vice"; Bodin, p. 9. In his *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livius* (tr. Christian E. Detmold), Machiavelli protested that, although the moderns were willing to pay great prices to artists to imitate the statues of the ancients, they failed signally to imitate the virtue and wisdom of antiquity as recorded in ancient history: "when we see, on the other hand, the wonderful examples which the history of ancient kingdoms and republics presents to us, the prodigies of virtue and of wisdom displayed by the kings, captains, citizens, and legislators who have sacrificed themselves for their country,—when we see these . . . more admired than imitated, or so much neglected that not the least trace of this ancient virtue remains, we cannot but be . . . as much surprised as afflicted"; Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince and the Discourses,* introd. by Max Lerner (New York, 1950), p. 104.

[72] See Robert H. West, "Milton's 'Giant Angels,'" *Modern Language Notes* **67** (1952): pp. 21–23; Hughes, "Satan and the Myth of the Tyrant," cited *supra;* Steadman, *Milton's Epic Characters,* pp. 177–193.

[73] See *Novum Organum* in Dick, pp. 537–538; *cf.* Steadman, "Beyond Hercules: Bacon and the Scientist as Hero," *Studies in the Literary Imagination* **4** (1971): pp. 3–47.

[74] Bacon frequently utilized heroic *topoi* in order to elevate the inventor and scientist above more conventional heroic types. According to the Proemium of his *De Interpretatione Naturae* (Dick, pp. 150–151) primitive mankind had bestowed divine honors on "the authors of rude inventions and discoveries." Whereas the "good effects wrought by founders of cities, law-givers, fathers of the people, extirpers of tyrants, and heroes of that class" are confined to brief periods of time and to narrow space, the "work of the Inventor . . . is felt everywhere and lasts for ever." Nobler still, however, is the man who succeeds not merely in discovering some particular invention but in "kindling a light in nature." Such a man would indeed be the "benefactor . . . of the human race"—as "propagator of man's empire over the universe," as "champion of liberty," and as "conqueror and subduer of necessities." Comparisons of intellectual discovery to new geographical voyages of exploration are likewise frequent in Bacon's writings; *cf.* Dick, p. 525, "that New Continent." In his scientific utopia, his ideal research foundation aims at "the knowledge of Causes, and secret motions of things" and at the "enlarging of the bounds of Human Empire"; *New Atlantis,* in Dick, p. 574.

[75] In *Novum Organum* (Dick, p. 517) Bacon contrasts *experimenta fructifera* (which aim at immediate practical results) with *experimenta lucifera* (which "are of no use in themselves, but simply serve to discover causes and axioms"). *Cf.* Preface to *Magna Instauratio* (Dick, p. 433): "all industry in experimenting has begun with proposing to itself certain definite works to be accomplished, and has pursued them with premature and unseasonable eagerness; it has sought . . . experiments of Fruit, not experiments of Light; not imitating the divine procedure, which in its first day's work created light only." Experience (Bacon asserts in *Novum Organum*) is by far "the best demonstration . . . , if it go not beyond the actual experiment"; p. 488. In *Paradise Lost* Eve is misled both by her own experiment and by the serpent's false report of his experience with the forbidden fruit; after her fall she acknowledges "Experience"—next to the tree of knowledge itself—as her best guide. Strictly speaking, Lucifer's invention of cannon and gunpowder is a "fructiferous" rather than a "luciferous" experiment; the forbidden fruit, on the other hand, involves a "luciferous" experiment, experience of the wisdom of the gods and the knowledge of causes.

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neris: it does not consistently follow any single poetic or historical prototype. Yet before leaving the subject we should recall two further analogies: Satan's marked resemblance to the Machiavellian prince, and his own parodic imitation of the royal and redemptive roles of Christ.

IX

In undertaking the long and dangerous voyage to discover and conquer a new world, expelling or enslaving its innocent inhabitants, Satan foreshadows the exploits of the Renaissance voyagers and conquistadores.[76] Although driven by envy and revenge, he is also inspired (like the conquerors of the West Indies) with love of honor and empire. He is the archetypal imperialist as well as the archetypal tyrant; and his conquest of Eden parallels the destruction of a new-world paradise, as certain Renaissance humanists saw it. In their eyes, the new world was another Eden, and the life of its inhabitants recalled the paradisal existence of men in the golden age. Noble primitives, naked as truth herself and clad only in their native innocence and virtue, they lived in peace and content in their original state of nature, guided by natural law and rejoicing in their native liberties. For these, the European conquest was a disaster, corrupting their original simplicity, destroying their content, and enslaving them physically and spiritually.

In justifying his conquest of "this new world," Satan pleads the excuse of political necessity and *raison d'état.*[77] These are Machiavellian *topoi,* implicit in the writings of the Florentine himself and subsequently elaborated by his disciples and his critics; they evoke the image of the Machiavellian prince. Satan's affinities with the Machiavellian hero are not exhausted, however, by this single allusion to "public reason just." To a certain extent, the image of the Machiavellian ruler, seeking new dominions by his own native abilities (*virtù*) and conquering by force or fraud, gives unity and coherence to the variety of heroic masks with which the poet invests his aspiring (and descending) arch-rebel. As heroic formula, it units the disparate images of the wily deceiver,

[76] The paradisal imagery applied to the New World and its inhabitants represented only one facet—and at times a minor one—of the Renaissance conception of America. Like idyllic images of the primitive condition of mankind, it was often complemented and sometimes overshadowed by more pejorative views. The antithesis between the primitive and civilized states of society served as a *topos* for contrary arguments: the freedom and simplicity of man's natural condition—or the advantages of a political order; the classical ideal of life according to nature—or the glory of arts and sciences. This antithesis is apparent in the contrast between the splendid civilization of hell (the glittering creation of an infernal renaissance) and the Arcadian simplicity of Eden. In its ambition, its arms and arts, and its political order, Pandaemonium foreshadows the civilization of the children of Cain and the worldly glories of the Augustinian *civitas terrena.* In the description of Eden Milton exploits the conventional primitivistic and pastoral *topoi;* but he nevertheless hedges them about with qualifications. The paradisal life and the glories of man's primitive state belong to a prelapsarian world and they perish with Adam's fall. External nature is altered as well as the nature of man. His postlapsarian existence will be far from idyllic; and only through primitive skills—agriculture and the use of fire—will he and his posterity survive.

As anti-Hispanic propaganda, the so-called *leyenda negra* of Spanish cruelty derived much of its material and many of its arguments from Spanish officials who had denounced the maltreatment of the natives by soldiers of fortune, or from Spanish clergymen who had maintained that the Indians could be converted to the Christian faith more effectively by persuasion and good example than by violence. In the eyes of other nations, the rulers of Spain had disguised their pursuit of wealth and dominion under a cloak of religious zeal. For these and related issues, see the forthcoming Proceedings of the International Conference on First Images of America: The Impact of the New World on the Old, held at the University of California at Los Angeles in February, 1975.

[77] For Milton's knowledge of Machiavelli's *Discorsi* and his *Dell' Arte della Guerra,* see Ruth Mohl, *John Milton and His Commonplace Book* (New York, 1969). From Machiavelli he drew arguments concerning tyranny (p. 211), republican and monarchical government (pp. 252, 277), rebellion (pp. 280–281), and similar topics. From the French Protestant André Rivet, Milton quoted a "denunciation of injustices sanctioned by political expedience." Attacking the political "sagacity of the age," Rivet protested that "what they consider useful they do not hesitate to choose rather than the honorable; what they judge to be useful, they consider necessary, and what is necessary is permissible." Ten years before entering this passage in his Commonplace Book, Milton had described "the masterpiece of a modern politician" in similar terms: "how rapine may serve it selfe with the fair, and honourable pretences of publick good, how the puny Law may be brought under the wardship, and controul of lust and will; in which attempt if they fall short, then must a superficial colour of reputation by all means direct or indirect be gotten to wash over the unsightly bruise of honor"; Mohl, pp. 40, 284. According to Friedrich Meinecke, *Machiavellism: The Doctrine of Raison d'État and Its Place in Modern History,* tr. Douglas Scott (New York and Washington, 1965), pp. 46–47n, *ragione di stato* began to become a catchphrase in "the third decade of the 16th century," but the theoretical discussion of this concept was "initiated by Botero in 1589." See also Joseph A. Bryant, Jr., "A Note on Milton's Use of Machiavelli's *Discorsi,*" *Modern Philology* **47** (1950): pp. 217–221; and the discussion by Merritt Hughes, in: *Complete Poetry and Major Prose* and related editions.

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the audacious warlord, the prudent leader, and the tyrant in a single, intelligible pattern: a type that was clearly recognizable for the poet's contemporaries and possessed both political and spiritual relevance for his age.

Satan's moral ambiguity—hero and villain, republican and tyrant—is reinforced by the uneasy tension between ethical and political values in *The Prince.* Though Machiavelli stresses the distinction between those princes who have acquired new dominions by villainy (Agathocles, Oliverotto da Fermo) and those who have acquired their dominions by their own arms and ability (Francesco Sforza) or else by fortune or the power of others (Cesare Borgia), the categories are not clearly drawn. Despite his courage and greatness of soul, Agathocles' cruelty bars him from the hall of fame;[78] yet an effective prince must on occasion risk the accusation of cruelty in pursuit of his political goals. (The difference appears to be largely a matter of degree.) A prince should, if possible, keep good faith; yet he should not hesitate to break it when expediency dictates.

Though Satan may be a villain in the sight of heaven as well as liar *ab initio,* he retains throughout the greater part of the fable a family likeness to the Machiavellian prince; if he could have read *Il Principe,* one suspects that he might have recognized his own features there. Though quick to seize the occasions or opportunities offered him, he acquires his realms through his own *virtù* in defiance of "fortune" and divine will. Achieving new dominions against great difficulties, he rivals Cesare Borgia in "great courage and high ambition," in resolution to conquer by force or fraud, and in ability to command reverence and obedience from his troops. Like the Machiavellian prince, he is an expert on problems of war and its discipline, can be cruel in the pursuit of political goals, can break faith when he deems it expedient. In prosecuting his enterprise, he knows how to act the beast, to imitate the fox[79] in guile as well as the lion in violence. He achieves his goal by astuteness and he excuses his choice of means by its end. Finally, his concern with mere appearances, especially evident in the "heroic" scenes of the early books, and his skill in disguising his real passions and his actual motives under the masks of pretended virtues associate him with the Machiavellian tradition.[80] In the

[78] See Meinecke, p. 33, on Agathocles; Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince,* tr. Luigi Ricci, rev. E. R. P. Vincent (New York, 1952), p. 60: "It cannot be called virtue to kill one's fellow-citizens, betray one's friends, be without faith, without pity, and without religion; by these methods one may indeed gain power, but not glory."

[79] Though Machiavelli censured the "brutta cupidità di regnare," he nevertheless praised "la voglia e la necessità dello acquistare," and he believed that the prince should know how "to make use of the brute as well as the man. . . ." The prince who did not want to be ruined "must behave like a fox among foxes, *vulpinari cum vulpibus";* Meinecke, pp. 41–45.

[80] "The desire to acquire possessions," Machiavelli had argued in *The Prince,* "is a very natural and ordinary thing, and when those men do it who can do so successfully, they are always praised and not blamed"; Vincent, p. 41. The great men who acquired new dominions by their own arms and ability (virtù) "owed nothing to fortune but the opportunity which gave them matter to be shaped into what form they thought fit." Though such men encounter "great difficulty in making their way" and must overcome dangers by their own abilities, their success insures them veneration; and once they have "suppressed those who envied them, they remain powerful and secure, honoured and happy"; Vincent, pp. 49–50. Francesco Sforza became duke of Milan through his own great abilities, whereas the fortunes of Cesare Borgia, despite his great *virtù,* were linked with those of his father. Nonetheless Borgia was "an example to be imitated by all who by fortune and with the arms of others have risen to power. For with his great courage and high ambition he could not have acted otherwise. Whoever, therefore, deems it necessary in his new principality to secure himself against enemies, . . . to conquer by force or fraud, . . . followed and reverenced by the soldiers, . . . such a one can find no better example than the actions of this man"; Vincent, pp. 52–58.

One may also become a prince through villainy, as did Agathocles and Oliverotto da Fermo. Agathocles' virtues "in braving and overcoming perils, and his greatness of soul in supporting and surmounting obstacles" place him among "the most renowned captains," but his "barbarous cruelty and inhumanity" exclude him from the ranks of the most famous men. One "cannot attribute to fortune or virtue that which he achieved without either"; Vincent, pp. 59–60.

The prince should "have no other aim or thought . . . but war and its organisation and discipline, for that is the only art . . . necessary to one who commands"; Vincent, p. 81. He should not "mind the charge of cruelty for the purpose of keeping his subjects united and faithful"; Vincent, p. 89. If necessary, he should break faith; in these days princes "have done great things who have had little regard for good faith, and have been able by astuteness to confuse men's brains, and who have ultimately overcome those who have made loyalty their foundation." He must know how "to use both the beast and the man," to fight by force as well as by law. Knowing "how to act as a beast," he must "imitate the fox and the lion," breaking faith when it no longer serves his interest. He should endeavor to "seem merciful, faithful, humane, sincere, religious, and also to be so"; but when necessary he must "be able to change to the opposite qualities, . . . able to do evil if constrained." "Let a prince therefore aim at conquering and maintaining the state, and the means will always be judged honourable

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"glorious Enterprise" in heaven, to be sure, he violates the first principle of the Machiavellian code and he loses. In the more modest objective he sets for his second enterprise, he is successful; and, by Machiavellian standards, he may justly expect honor and applause.

Satan's political tergiversation—in heaven a scourge of monarchy, in hell a monarch himself—is paralleled by the tension between Machiavelli's republican sympathies and his program for the Renaissance prince.[81] The revolting angel can appeal to Machiavellian principles to justify his rebellion against an alleged tyrant; the monarch of hell can exploit other Machiavellian counsels to establish and extend his kingdom. The ambiguities that surround the Satanic image as statesman and as conqueror—the resemblance to classical heroes, the mixture of public and private ends, the equivocal nature of his heroic virtue—recall the image of the Machiavellian leader as he appears either in the writings of the Florentine himself or in those of later political theorists.

Satan himself claims to have undertaken his enterprise for the public good, the *salus populi.* It is a matter of "public moment," and his followers praise him for placing the "general safety" before his own. When detected by Gabriel's angelic guard, he argues the responsibility of a faithful leader; and at his first glimpse of his intended prey he pleads the excuse of "public reason." In Milton's eyes, conversely, he is a thief and a homicide. The antithesis was traditional not only in Renaissance critiques of Machiavellism but in patristic attacks on the abuse of political expendiency. The works of Tacitus (Meinecke observed) "are steeped in the idea of *raison d'état,*" such as the statement in the *Annals:* "Habet aliquid ex iniquo omne magnum exemplum, quod contra singulos, utilitate publica rependitur." For Saint Augustine, however, an unjust reign was merely a grandiose form of robbery: "Remota justitia quid sunt regna nisi magna latrocinia?" In contrast to pagan antiquity, the Christian Middle Ages was painfully aware of the conflict between *raison d'état* and the principles of law and morality; "ruthless *raison d'état* is really sinful, a sin against God and divine standards."[82]

This antithesis between classical and Christian points of view was revived in the Renaissance (Meinecke suggested) by Machiavelli: "at heart a heathen," saturated with the "spirit of antiquity." Dazzled by the grandeur of the ancient world and its ideals of secular glory, the Florentine had "wanted to bring back once again that united strength of sense and intellect in the natural genuine man, where *grandezza d'animo* and *fortezza del corpo* combined together to create heroism." Even in Agathocles "he recognized . . . a real *virtù* and *grandezza dell' animo,* i.e. great virtues in a ruler." In Milton's ruined archangel the classical ideal is still recognizable, even though the *grandezza d'animo* is a ruined greatness. Es-

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and praised by every one, for the vulgar is always taken by appearances and the issue of the event"; Vincent, pp. 92–94.

Finally, "Nothing causes a prince to be so much esteemed as great enterprises and giving proof of prowess." Ferdinand of Aragon became famous through his military power. Moreover, in order "to be able to undertake greater enterprises, and always under the pretext of religion, he had recourse to a pious cruelty, driving out the Moors from his kingdom and despoiling them. No more miserable or unusual example can be found. He also attacked Africa under the same pretext"; Vincent, p. 110.

Cf. Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy,* tr. S. G. C. Middlemore (New York, 1950), p. 93, on Machiavelli's criticism of earlier historians of Florence: "'They erred greatly and showed that they understood little the ambition of men and the desire to perpetuate a name. How many who could distinguish themselves by nothing praiseworthy, strive to do so by infamous deeds!'" Serious writers (Burckhardt continued) traced the motivation of political conspiracies and assassinations to the "burning desire" to achieve "something great and memorable." In the *History of Florence and of the Affairs of Italy* (New York, 1960), p. 295, Machiavelli described Stefano Porcari's conspiracy against the pope as the action of a man eager to win glory by attempting "something worthy of memory." Porcari had resolved to "deliver his country from the hands of the prelates, and restore the ancient form of government; hoping . . . to be considered a new founder or second father of the city." One of the assassins of Galeazzo Sforza (Machiavelli, *History,* p. 355) died with a Latin epigram on his lips: "Mors acerba, fama perpetua, stabit vetus memoria facti."

[81] In Meinecke's opinion (p. 43), "The contrast between the monarchist bias in the *Principe* and the republican tinge of the *Discorsi* is only apparent. The quantity of *virtù,* which existed in a people, was the factor that decided whether a monarchy or a republic was the more suitable. So it was only consistent that, for his disjointed times, he demanded a monarchical despot and took him to be a necessity of State." The spiritual and political condition of the fallen angels parallels that of fallen man; having lost their inner freedom, they forfeit their external liberty to a tyrant. In Satan's shift from republican arguments in heaven to a monarchical role in hell one may perceive perhaps a realistic, "Machiavellian" response to the diminished *virtù* of his fallen legions.

[82] Meinecke, pp. 25–29.

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tablishing his realm through murder and betrayal and in defiance of loyalty, piety, and religion, Satan resembles Agathocles (the villain as prince) more closely than the true Machiavellian hero; and, like Agathocles, he achieves mastery rather than true glory.[83]

Machiavelli's distinction between two types of *virtù*—the common civic virtues and "the wisdom, energy and ambition of the great founders and rulers of States" [84]—is likewise relevant to Milton's Satan. Indeed it is the tension between them that ruins him:

> O had his powerful Destiny ordain'd
> Me some inferior Angel, I had stood
> Then happy. . . .

Unable to brook a superior, the archangel cannot obey like a "good citizen" of heaven; and the very *virtù* that would elevate a Sforza and a Borgia destroys him.

The tensions between *virtù, fortuna,* and *necessità* also recur in the Satanic rhetoric; they are implicit in what Lewis has termed "the Satanic predicament." In boasting his constancy in adversity, the devil exploits a Stoic commonplace, the superiority of virtue to adverse fortune. Associating virtue with natural strength, he argues that hell itself cannot contain "Immortal vigor," and that "Celestial Virtues rising, will appear/ More glorious and more dread than from no fall." (In reality, like fallen man, he has been shorn of his virtue; and, subsequently beholding "Virtue in her shape how lovely," he will grieve at his own loss.) He will be adept at seizing the occasions for positive action that fortune (i.e. providence) offers him, but will otherwise (in his own view) owe nothing else to fortune. He glories in escaping the burning lake through his own *virtù,* his own "recover'd strength,/ Not by the sufferance of supernal Power." Later (in his own eyes) he conquers a world by his own *virtù* rather than by fortune's aid. (In fact, of course, he has been indirectly ruled by providence, and he has achieved his conquest—his *only* conquest—less through virtue than through villainy.)

Excusing "his devilish deeds" with "necessity,/ The Tyrant's plea," he again invokes a Machiavellian *topos.* Necessity was not only the source of morality, according to Machiavelli; it was also useful for human actions and often led to glory: "The more *necessità* there is, . . .the more *virtù* there will be also, and *necessità* can bring us to many things, which reason is not strong enough to drive us to." In order to maintain the state (he declared elsewhere), a prince "is often obliged (*necessitato*) to act without loyalty, without mercy, without humanity, and without religion." If necessary, the ruler "must have the courage to save the State even *con ignominia.*" While the argument from necessity serves to justify the unscrupulous means Satan elects to prosecute his political goals, the stimulus of necessity underlies the very foundation of the infernal state. The astonishing political and military recovery of the fallen angels is a dramatic fulfillment of an ideal that Meinecke believed to be the "central idea in Machiavelli's life: . . . the regeneration of a fallen people by means of the *virtù* of a tyrant, and by the means of the levering power of all the measures dictated by *necessità.*" [85]

No less significant for Milton's characterization of Satan as "archetypal tyrant," however, were the questions raised by early opponents or disciples of Machiavelli. Della Casa objected that the notion *Utile ragion di stato* blurred the distinction between tyrants and kings, men and beasts. Writing after the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, the Huguenot Gentillet protested that the law of nature "forbade one to follow the advice of Machiavelli and drive the inhabitants out of a conquered country"—a policy echoed in Beelzebub's proposal to "drive, as we were driven,/ The puny inhabitants, or if not drive,/ Seduce them to our party." Gentillet recognized Machiavelli's scheme as an effort to establish a despotism. Bodin insisted that the ruler should aim at the *salus populi,* and he rejected a "boundlessly ambitious policy of power and conquest." Nevertheless (like Machiavelli) he demanded a "type of resolution, which will overcome any irrational limitations due to a sense of honour"; in his opinion, "Nothing can appear contemptible, which is bound up with the safety of the State." [86]

Boccalini, in turn, declared that self-interest "tyrannizes over the souls of tyrants" and even over other princes. When "ambition enters the soul of a prince, then he is no longer a protector of men, no longer a viceroy of God on earth; he changes into a dragon, a Lucifer." "The interest of the State is exactly like a hound of Actaeon, it tears out the entrails of its own master. Hell

[83] Meinecke, pp. 31–33.
[84] Meinecke, p. 32.
[85] Meinecke, pp. 37, 40–41, 60.
[86] Meinecke, pp. 47–48, 53, 55, 60.

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has no terror which could frighten the heart that is filled with the passion for ruling." "The desire to govern is a daemon which even holy water will not drive out." The history of Rome provided a spectacle not of greatness but of robberies and worldwide devastation. The glory of a Tiberius and the greatest *virtù* of a ruler sprang from the dark and gloomy "depths of the soul," the *"cupezza dell 'animo."* [87]

Later theorists distinguished between good and bad reasons of state. In Chiaramonti's opinion, the evil *ragione di stato* was "rooted in an excessive striving for domination." Whereas "the good kind was directed towards the general well-being and happiness, by methods acceptable to morality and religion," the "bad kind made use of impermissible methods, and was aimed at the special and personal advantage of the rulers." Machiavelli's doctrine amounted (Chiaramonti protested) to positive "adoration of the ruler"; it made him "the measure of all acts, the source of all justice and moral goodness," and endowed him "with divine attributes." Ludovico Settola, on the other hand, believed that the real aim of the *ragione di stato* was not the public welfare but the welfare of "those who were at the head of the State." Frachetta objected that "the principle of *vincere con fraude"* was "opposed to genuine valour and detracted from the glory of the victor." Even though Clapmar condemned "the immoral Machiavellism, the *flagita dominationis,*" he nevertheless admitted that "deception was an indispensable method in statecraft." From Tacitus he derived a theory concerning the utility of political illusions—*simulacra imperii seu libertatis;* having deprived his subjects of their real rights and freedoms, the ruler presented them instead with mere "illusions of justice and freedom." [88]

The Renaissance debate over *ragioni di stato* provided *topoi* that could be deployed both for and against the politics of Machiavelli. They were two-edged blades that cut either way. Milton could utilize them simultaneously to strengthen and to undercut his image of the devil as Machiavellian hero. As tyrant, Satan regenerates a fallen people, politically and militarily, through false hopes; but he cannot confer true spiritual regeneration. This belongs exclusively to his arch-rival the Messiah. He pursues his own self-interest, his own ambition, as well as the public safety; [89] and he is punished (in imagery that

[87] Meinecke, pp. 75–77. Though Milton had read Boccalini's *Ragguagli di Parnaso,* he could not have seen *La bilancia politica* (a commentary on Tacitus), which was not published until 1678. He had, however, read widely in Tacitus himself, and in the latter's portrait of Tiberius as arch-dissembler he would have found another classical prototype for his characterization of Satan as a Machiavellian prince, an accomplished master at the vulpine art of dissimulation. Observing that "Boccalini felt himself to be in the middle of a century of the most profound wickedness," Meinecke contrasted his political and ethical views with those of Machiavelli: though Boccalini "showed an increased moral sensitivity in respect of the methods of statecraft," he had lost "the vigorous radicalism of Machiavelli which, in spite of all the wickedness of his methods, had nevertheless concealed a strong power of belief." Boccalini "felt that the republican asylum, which he eventually sought in Venice, was an asylum ringed round by the robber-dens of the princes"; Meinecke, pp. 71–73. For Milton's knowledge of Boccalini and Tacitus, see Mohl, *passim.*

[88] Meinecke, pp. 119, 120, 123–125, 132–133. *Cf.* Francis Bacon's references (in *The Advancement of Learning*) to such Machiavellian doctrines as the political utility of force and fraud, the merits of cultivating the appearance rather than the reality of virtue, and the value of knowing the evil arts; Dick, pp. 246, 330–331, 372. It "belongeth to the education and discipline of princes to know how to play the part of the lion in violence and the fox in guile, as of the man in virtue and justice." "As for evil arts, if a man would set down for himself that principle of Machiavel, *that a man seek not to attain virtue itself, but the appearance only thereof; because the credit of virtue is a help, but the use of it is cumber;* certainly with these dispensations from the laws of charity and integrity the pressing of a man's fortune may be more hasty and compendious." Nevertheless "the shortest way is commonly the foulest." Transferring to Machiavellian realism the Biblical image of the wise serpent, Bacon argued that knowledge of "deceits and evil arts" is the best protection against them. Expressing gratitude "to Machiavel and others, that write what men do and not what they ought to do," Bacon observed that "it is not possible to join serpentine wisdom with the columbine innocency, except men know exactly all the conditions of the serpent; his baseness and going upon his belly, his volubility and lubricity, his envy and sting, and the rest; that is, all forms and natures of evil." In the same treatise Bacon remarked (p. 168) that "men bred in learning are perhaps to seek in points of convenience and accommodating for the present, which the Italians call *ragioni di stato,* whereof . . . Pius Quintus could not hear spoken with patience, terming them inventions against religion and the moral virtues."

[89] In undertaking the perilous adventure through space Satan himself defines his motive as the responsibilities of a ruler. In a passage reminiscent of Sarpedon's speech to Glaucus in the *Iliad,* he argues that he ought to "accept as great a share/ Of hazard as of honor . . . ," the honors accorded a king. Milton's own comment, however, indicates that the devil is seeking additional honors—the renown of a hero—earning "high repute . . . through hazard." Precisely how much Satan is actually concerned for "the general safety" is left purposely ambiguous. The

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provides striking parallels with that of Boccalini) by transformation into a dragon. (The hounds that rend his symbolic daughter, Sin, may remind us of another Boccalinian metaphor.) Again, he cannot truly achieve the *salus populi;* the office of spiritual salvation belongs solely to the Son of God. The ambiguity of the Machiavellian ruler—king or tyrant?—underlies the very foundations of Satan's own throne; he is not only a despot, but a type of the specifically Oriental brand of despotism, worshiped as a god and affecting divine attributes. The polity of hell is founded on *simulacra imperii et libertatis,* illusions of freedom and empire that disguise the realities of moral slavery.

In pursuing reasons of state, Satan is driven by an excessive desire for domination, and he implements his policy by fraud. Like Ferdinand of Aragon, he knows how to disguise his ambition for conquest under the pretext of devotion and zeal. He deceives the regent of the sun, the "sharpest-sighted Spirit of all in Heav'n," by feigning an "unspeakable desire to see, and know" God's works. He deceives Eve "with show of Zeal and Love/ To Man, and indignation at his wrong." In seeking to save the state and to extend its sovereignty through deception and *con ignominia,* he discards the image of man, literally as well as symbolically, for that of the beast, exchanging the idealized anthropomorphism of his archangelic shape for theriomorphic disguises. Instead of "foxing it with the foxes," however, he concludes by creeping and hissing with the serpents.

In Satan's enterprise, as Milton portrays it, *raison d'état* appears much as the Renaissance anti-Machiavellians conceived it, as an offense against honor and true glory and a sin against God. Nevertheless it has fulfilled a primary demand of the Machiavellian scheme—success. The ends—honor, empire, revenge—have seemingly justified the inglorious means whereby the hero secured them: means that the devil himself regards as shameful. For the "anti-Machiavels" this would be "honor dishonorable," glory attained through infamy.[90] In Machiavellian theory, however, the ignominy would soon be forgotten; the honor and the empire would remain.

Satan wins through Machiavellian strategy and tactics, but his victory can bring him neither internal peace nor happiness. The Stygian *cupezza d'animo* and the hounds of Actaeon remain with him still. Like other Machiavellian despots, he is victorious, vicious, and damned.

Just as the classical details in Milton's Satanic portrait obliquely censure the heroic worthies of the ancients as more devilish than godlike, its Machiavellian features evoke an image of familiar Renaissance political ideal only to subvert it. It constitutes, in effect, a *reductio ad absurdum* of the evil *ragione di stato.* Like the stereotype of the cannon as an "infernal machine," Machiavelli's

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"Spirits damn'd" do not "Lose all thir virtue," Milton comments,

> . . . lest bad men should boast
> Thir specious deeds on earth, which glory excites,
> Or close ambition varnisht o'er with zeal.

Cf. Machiavelli's observations on Ferdinand of Aragon's policy of cloaking his military ambitions with piety (note 80, *supra*), and Rohan's argument that "the prestige of Spain really rested on the fact that she concealed her plans under a cloak of piety and of great zeal"; Meinecke, p. 173.

[90] Like the craving for glory, the dread of shame is a traditional heroic attribute, and it remains a constant in Satan's character. To "sue for grace," he declares to Beelzebub, in his first speech in the poem, would be "an ignominy and shame/ Beneath this downfall . . ." On Mount Niphates he confesses that disdain and his "dread of shame/ Among the Spirits beneath" forbid him to seek pardon by submission. He dons his serpentine disguise with reluctance ("O foul descent!"), but promptly rationalizes his action in a passage that parodies the Machiavellian victory through ignominious means, but also suggests his own despair and disillusionment:

> But what will not Ambition and Revenge
> Descend to? who aspires must down as low
> As high he soar'd, obnoxious first or last
> To basest things.

Condemnation of the pursuit of glory through ignominious means or in a vicious cause occurs frequently in both of Milton's epics. Refusing to name the greater part of the rebel host, Raphael explains that

> . . . strength from Truth divided and from Just,
> Illaudable, naught merits but dispraise
> And ignominy, yet to glory aspires
> Vain-glorious, and through infamy seeks fame: . . .

Michael censures the giant "men of high renown" as mere "Destroyers . . . and Plagues of men," and their glorious victories as manslaughter. Such crimes win renown in a perverted world, while "what most merits fame" remains hidden in silence. Milton offers a further critique of earthly glory and martial conquest in *Paradise Regained,* Book III. *Cf.* Bodin's remarks on the *topos* of infamy and fame (Bodin, *Method,* pp. 9–10): "What Trogus Pompey reported about Herostratus and Titus Livy about Manlius Capitolinus is not true, not even probable, I think—that they were more eager for great fame than for good fame. I believe that despondency and madness impelled the former; the other was led by a hope of increased prestige through ruling his fellow citizens."

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association with the secretariat of hell was proverbial. Milton converted both of these clichés into poetry by associating them with the author of evil himself. In *Paradise Lost* the inventor of that "devilish Enginry" is literally the devil. The archetype of the Machiavellian prince is literally the Prince of Hell.

Condemnation of the Machiavellian pattern is implicit in the infernal origin that Milton ascribes to it. Yet this oblique rebuttal is not enough. A direct refutation is required, and it demands the intervention of a *deus ex machina.* By an act of divine judgment the triumph secured *con ignominia* is rewarded with ignominy; the fraudulent tempter converted into the shape of fraud.

X

As Machiavellian hero the devil alters his public character and his policies as expediency dictates; what appears to be an inconsistency in characterization may be little more than a deliberate exchange of masks, as he adapts his policy and his public image to altered circumstances. Thus his apparently "republican" oratory in heaven is in large part intentionally deceptive; and his transition from rebellious peer to infernal king, from anti-monarchist to monarch himself, involves rather a change in rhetorical stance[91] than in motivation. In heaven he exhorts his followers to revolution in the name of liberty and equality, arguing from the etymological sense of *peers* (i.e. equals or *pares*); but the parity that he actually aspires to is equality with the king of heaven himself. In hell Satan achieves kingship through a bloodless *coup d'état*—an easy transition from general to monarch; after reasserting his authority as military commander he enthrones himself without opposition as emperor of hell. In marked contrast to his own exaltation, the commons are reduced to physical, and political, insignificance: "smallest forms" and "less than smallest Dwarfs. . . ." The infernal peerage, on the other hand—the "great Seraphic Lords and Cherubim"—retain their own vast dimensions. The political order of Pandaemonium is patently "elitist," and parliamentary representation is restricted to a unicameral House of Lords.

As a caricature of the political rituals of Renaissance Europe—the ceremonial speech from the throne, and the formalities of parliamentary debate—the scene in Pandaemonium simultaneously exhibits the strength and weakness of the infernal state. In contrast to their earlier confusion, the fallen angels have restored political as well as military discipline and established an orderly and stable government. This they owe primarily to Satan himself; not only are they effectively united in the shadow of his safe, unenvied throne, but it is his own proposal (as presented through Beelzebub) that reconciles their political conflicts. Thanks to his political skills, "Devil with Devil damn'd/ Firm concord holds." On the other hand, the debate has exposed the strategic vulnerability of their position. For all their strength and sagacity, their political and military capabilities are strictly limited, and their liberty of action severely curtailed, by the fact that they are, and must remain, under the iron rule of an omniscient and omnipotent enemy. Moreover, they have forfeited (though they do not yet realize the fact) their moral freedom through sin. Finally, like fallen man, they have surrenderd their natural liberties to a usurper: the first of a long line of despots. Enthroned in Pandaemonium, Satan consciously imitates the majesty of the king of heaven; yet he also bears an ironic resemblance to a Renaissance king in parliament. The Satanic image is a portrait of the king as tyrant, and Milton reinforces its anti-royalist implications by allusion to other despotic parallels: the Roman dictator or imperator in consult with an obsequious Senate; an Oriental Sultan in his divan.[92]

[91] In commenting on Satan's political rhetoric, Miss Mahood compared the devil's rhetorical appeals to liberty with royalist and anti-royalist propaganda on the same theme. In his argument that he and his followers should be exempt from law and edict since "without law" they "erre not," she found an "implicit" analogy with "the Stuart pretension to Divine Right." Hence the devil's speech should be correctly interpreted not as a liberator's protest against tyranny but "rather as the tyrant's assault upon liberty's safeguard, the law." His "revolt against the hierarchical order of Heaven is . . . rooted in his own pride rather than in a genuine desire for equality" (pp. 212–213).

[92] *Cf.* Hughes, "Satan and the Myth of the Tyrant," cited *supra.* See also Ruth Mohl, *Studies in Spenser, Milton and the Theory of Monarchy* (New York, 1949). The image of Satan as monarch, for all its barbaric splendor, is undercut by the absurdity of a Whitehall in Newgate, where a condemned traitor reigns as rival of the very power that has immured him there. Sovereignty in hell, ruled as it is by the iron scepter of heaven, is illusory and can be appropriately claimed only by illusions and phantasms: the devil as *eidolon* of divine majesty and the lethal specter at the gate of hell. While Satan's authority as monarch of hell is justly challenged by Death as "Thy King and Lord, the pretensions of the infernal warder to lordship are, in turn, refuted by his mother

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As a false image of divine majesty, Satan is simultaneously pseudo-god and pseudo-king. His portrait foreshadows political as well as religious idolatry,[93] just as his oratory anticipates the idolisms of sophistic rhetoric. For Milton, the three were virtually inseparable, for they were an affront to divine unity, divine sovereignty, and divine truth; there could be but one God, one supreme king, one Logos. As *eidolon* the Satanic image discredits a conventional political ideal as well as a traditional concept of heroic virtue. To discredit the latter, Milton elevates the devil into archetypal conqueror; to discredit the former, he depicts the devil as tyrannical king. In both cases he can exploit the *topos* of divine resemblance explicit in the Biblical account of Lucifer's rebellion. Heroic virtue was commonly extolled as "godlike" or "divine," and the ancient heroes themselves had been honored as demigods or as gods. A similar divinity surrounded the Renaissance king in the eyes of many political theorists. As God's own vicegerent, he was the image of divine majesty and ruled by divine sanction; to rebel against him was to contemn divine authority, to revolt against God. The Scriptures themselves (as royalist divines hastened to point out) accorded the title of "gods" to princes and judges.[94] Finally, Hobbes himself describes his ideal commonwealth—the union of the multitude in "one Person" represented by the sovereign power or prince —as "that great LEVIATHAN, or rather . . . that *Mortall God,* to which wee owe under the *Immortall God,* our peace and defence." [95]

Satan consistently addresses his fallen angels as "gods," and it is as gods that he and his com-

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Sin: he is merely the "drudge" of the king of heaven. It is a tribute to Satan's mastery of statecraft, perhaps, that he can persuade Death (who is in fact his master) to serve as his vicegerent.

[93] Both as anti-royalist and as royal sovereign himself, Satan is consistently the adversary of the "sole King" of the universe. As a rebel against the monarchy of heaven, he not only aspires to "Divided Empire with Heav'n's King," but in fact introduces polytheism. Idolatry enters hell when his own followers worship him as a god. Idolatry enters Eden when Eve bestows divine honors on the forbidden tree. Polytheism enters the world when his host of angels receive adoration as gods and become known as "various Idols" throughout the heathen world. This is one mode of idolatry, the adoration of devils as deities; but there is also another mode, as the Milton who wrote *Eikonoklastes* was well aware: the adoration of a prince as an image of God on earth. The giants of the heroic age—"Destroyers rightlier call'd and Plagues of men"—assume such magnific titles as "Patrons of Mankind, Gods, and Sons of Gods." Usurping authority and dominion, Nimrod achieves an "Empire tyrannous":

> A mighty Hunter thence he shall be styl'd
> Before the Lord, as in despite of Heav'n,
> Or from Heav'n claiming second Sovranty;
> And from Rebellion shall derive his name,
> Though of Rebellion others he accuse.

Cf. Edwin Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas on Christianity* (New York, 1957), pp. 206–207, on the older sense of divine Monarchy as signifying "the sole government of the one God" in contrast to "government of many gods."

[94] In the controversy over the divine right of kings as God's vicegerents on earth, both royalist and anti-royalist propagandists were compelled to reckon with Biblical allusions to princes and magistrates as "gods." According to Exodus 22: 28 (AV), "Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people"; in the Geneva version, "Thou shalt not raile upon the Judges." In commenting on Psalm 82: 1, "God standeth in the assembly of gods; he judgeth among gods," the Geneva headnote and gloss explain that "The Prophet declaring God to bee present among the Judges and Magistrates . . . Reprooveth their partialitie . . ." and that "The Prophet sheweth, that if princes and judges do not their duetie, God, whose authoritie is above them, will take vengeance on them." Another passage in the same psalm (82: 6), "I have said, Yee are gods," is echoed in John 10:34. If these texts seemed to give aid and comfort to the royalists, their opponents might counter with 1 Corinthians 8: 5–6 (Geneva), "For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven, or in earth (as there be many gods, and many lords) Yet unto us there is but one God . . . : and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."

For the polemical exploitation of Biblical references to kings as gods, see *Complete Prose Works of John Milton* 3 (1962), ed. Merritt Y. Hughes, pp. 165–166, 197, 202, 204, 307–308, 435. In *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates,* Milton protested that "if the King feare not God, . . . we hold then our lives and estates, by the tenure of his meer grace and mercy, as from a God, not a mortal Magistrate, a position that none but Court Parasites or men besotted would maintain." In *Observations upon the Articles of Peace* he demanded by "what expressed Law" the king "should sit himselfe like a demigod in lawlesse and unbounded *anarchy,*" making "himself a God, exalted above Law." In *Eikonoklastes,* he condemned an allusion to Charles's *"Acts of grace"* as "proud, and unself-knowing words in the mouth of any King, who affects not to be a God." As Hughes points out, James I declared that the king is "Gods Lieutenant in earth" and that "Kings are called Gods" by King David "because they sit upon God his Throne in the earth." In the *Eikon Basilike,* Charles I is represented as condemning those who rail against kings, the "shadows of God," and honored by Scripture itself with the "name of 'Gods.'" Robert Weldon endeavored "to prove that the title of anointed ones, or Christs, or . . . Elohim, or gods, belonged of right to all Christian kings."

[95] *Hobbes' Leviathan Reprinted from the Edition of 1651* (Oxford, 1909), p. 132.

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panion (as they believe) have escaped the burning lake. The title would have been legitimate for the faithful angels as official messengers of the deity, but in the case of the fallen angels it has been invalidated (like their other celestial titles) by their revolt against God. The same argument could be evoked against earthly princes and magistrates who rebelled against deity by assuming divine prerogatives or by directly disobeying divine law. The term itself (as Milton recognized in his *Christian Doctrine*) is equivocal;[96] and in the political context of hell it may carry several different but complementary implications: direct rivalry with the one true God, the monarch of heaven; vain assertion of an angelic title that is no longer valid; a foreshadowing of the future adoration that the fallen angels will receive as deities among the heathen;[97] a foreshadowing of the divine or quasi-divine honors sought by mortal kings and tyrants. (In this last sense Milton's Satanic image could be interpreted, as it sometimes has been, both as anti-Stuart and anti-papal propaganda; but it would be difficult to find genuine proof for either of these interpretations. In the transformation-scene in Book X and in Milton's use of the conventional Satan-Leviathan image in Book I, one could conceivably recognize an oblique attack on the absolutist doctrine of Hobbes; but this too would be hard to substantiate. As Milton must have been aware, the word *Leviathan* bore a variety of senses over and above its familiar use as a synonym for the whale. It had been interpreted etymologically as "society of serpents"—a reading symbolically appropriate for the public catastrophe that overtakes the infernal state; and in Renaissance dictionaries it carries the specifically political senses retained by Hobbes: *society, union, king* or *prince*. As a competent Hebraist, Milton would, one feels, have recognized in Hobbes's *Leviathan* a direct successor to Machiavelli's *Il Principe*.)[98]

XI

More significant than the classical and Machiavellian features of Milton's pseudo-hero is the parodic relationship between Satan's role in the poem and that of the divine Father and Son. Vainly aspiring to be like the Most High, Satan becomes an ape of deity, a *simia Dei*.[99] In "affecting all equality with God," he calls his royal seat in the north "The Mountain of the Congregation," in direct "imitation of that Mount whereon/ *Messiah* was declar'd in sight of Heav'n." On the battlefield he appears "exalted as a God" an "Idol of Majesty Divine, enclos'd/ With Flaming Cherubim and golden Shields. . . ." His "Sun-bright Chariot" is a shadow of the reality he will encounter later: the Son of God mounted in the chariot of paternal deity. The thunder of the devil's artillery mocks the divine thunder that will shortly destroy him:

> . . . eternal might
> To match with thir inventions they presum'd
> So easy, and of his Thunder made a scorn. . . .

The same pattern of parodic imitation recurs in Moloch's proposal to oppose "Infernal Thunder" to God's "Almighty Engine" and "Black fire and horror" against His lightning. Mammon similarly proposes to "imitate" the divine light through the gold and gems of hell. Finally, as "Hell's dread Emperor" Satan makes his exit from the Stygian conclave "with pomp Supreme,/ And God-like imitated State" in the midst of a "Globe of fiery Seraphim inclos'd/ With bright imblazonry, and horrent Arms."

Other facets of the Satanic image provide a grotesque parody of theological doctrine, though the devil is usually unaware both of the analogy and of the distortion. In the infernal triad—Satan, Sin, and Death—Rajan[100] recognized a parody of

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[96] Milton himself cites the texts from 1 Corinthians and the Gospel of John in Book I, Chapter 5 of the *Christian Doctrine; The Prose Works of John Milton* **4** (Bohn Library, London, 1870): pp. 105–109. He maintains that "The name of God seems to be attributed to angels because as heavenly messengers they bear the appearance of the divine glory and person, and even speak in the very words of the Deity." Similarly, "The name of God is ascribed to judges, because they occupy the place of God to a certain degree in the administration of judgement." See Theodore H. Banks, "The Meaning of Gods in *Paradise Lost*," *Modern Language Notes* **54** (1939): pp. 450–454; J. C. Maxwell, "'Gods' in *Paradise Lost*," *Notes and Queries* **193** (1948): pp. 234–236, 242.

[97] Merritt Y. Hughes, "Devils to Adore for Deities," in *Studies in Honor of DeWitt T. Starnes*, ed. Thomas P. Harrison *et al.* (Austin, 1967), pp. 241–258. Satan's "Synod of gods" are pseudodeities who (like the despotic kings of the fallen world) have forfeited their ambiguous title as "gods" through their rebellion against God himself. As *eidola* of divine majesty, they are analogous to earthly tyrants as objects of a false and superstitious worship.

[98] *Cf.* Steadman, "Leviathan and Renaissance Etymology," *Jour. History of Ideas* **28** (1967): pp. 575–576.

[99] *Cf.* Maximilian Rudwin, "Diabolus Simia Dei," *Open Court* **43** (1929): pp. 602–611.

[100] Balachandra Rajan, *Paradise Lost and the Seventeenth-Century Reader* (London, 1947), p. 50; Hughes,

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the Trinity. The birth of Sin and Death has invited comparison with the generation of the Son as Logos and the procession of the Holy Spirit. As the Father confers universal vicegerency on the Son, Satan appoints his own offspring as plenipotentiaries over a fallen universe. In Satan's reluctance to seek incarnation in a brute, Mother Mary Christopher Pecheux perceived an ironic contrast with the voluntary incarnation of the son.[101] The devil seduces mankind by stooping to conquer; Messiah saves humanity and triumphs over Satan through his humiliation. Satan professes to seek the general safety, while despising his own; Christ accomplishes his work of salvation, the true *salus populi,* through his own death. As the heads of warring kingdoms committed to contrary policies of good or evil both heroes contend for ghostly dominion over the human soul, both hazard their lives in volunteering to enter the world, both conquer through enduring shame, both return to their thrones in triumph. The infernal counterpoint to the celestial theme not only reinforces the pattern of moral and spiritual opposition implicit in the narrative structure of the poem but also heightens the antithesis between truth and illusion. Hell is a pseudo-heaven, an illusory imitation of the kingdom of God, just as the prince of hell is a pseudo-deity, a caricature of the Lord and his Anointed. As in a distorting mirror, where values like directions are reversed, we can recognize in the devil and his angels not only a faithful prototype of the fallen world but a shadow of the heaven they have lost.[102]

As epic antagonist—"Adversary of God and Man"—Satan's role is defined and shaped by his own adversaries. Envy of Messiah's glory provokes his revolt in heaven and subsequently goads him on to attempt a desperate "final Battle." Envy of the happiness of man incites him to man's destruction. Glorying in the name of "*Satan* . . . , Antagonist of Heav'n's Almighty King," he seeks glory both as reigning king and conquering hero through a strategy of direct moral contradiction.[103] If God wills what is good, His Adversary must will the contrary:

> . . . but of this be sure,
> To do aught good never will be our task,
> But ever to do ill our sole delight,
> As being the contrary to his high will
> Whom we resist.

If God seeks to bring good out of evil, the Adversary must labor "to pervert that end,/ And out of good still to find means of evil." If God has manifested his glory in the creation of the world, the Adversary must achieve glory by destroying it:

> To mee shall be the glory sole among
> Th'infernal Powers, in one day to have marr'd
> What he *Almighty* styl'd, six Nights and Days
> Continu'd making, and who knows how long
> Before had been contriving. . . .

The nature of Satan's role is defined by his name itself, and as Adversary he combines several variant aspects of the traditional epic antagonist. Usually in classical heroic poetry and in Renaissance chivalric epic, warriors on opposing sides may be more or less evenly matched in strength and skill. These are "worthy" opponents, who have accumulated fame and honor through their past victories; and a hero wins honor—in fact a veritable sweepstake of honors—in vanquishing them. (Thus Hector is a worthy antagonist for Achilles, and Turnus for Aeneas.)[104] Ethically the epic antagonist may differ little from the epic hero himself, both serving as exemplars of a common heroic *ethos.* In other instances, however, they may be sharply differentiated in character and piety, and the antagonist may become the spiritual as well as the physical adversary of the hero: choleric tyrant, defiant atheist, valiant infidel, or bold villain. In a psychomachia, in turn—a battle of virtues and vices—the antagonist becomes, of course, a moral abstraction: the logical contrary of a victorious virtue. This pattern could, moreover, be superimposed

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Complete Poems, cited *supra,* p. 252n. See also Rajan, "The Cunning Resemblance," in *Milton Studies,* ed. Albert C. Labriola and Michael Lieb (Pittsburgh, 1975) **7**: pp. 29–48, for a reassessment of the "importance of parody as a continuing element in the structure of Milton's poems."

[101] Pecheux, "O Foul Descent!" cited *supra;* Pecheux; "The Second Adam and the Church in *Paradise Lost,*" *English Literary History* **34** (1967): pp. 173–187.

[102] Miss Mahood (p. 187) sees Milton's hell as "the concave mirror of Heaven, a Heaven-through-the-Looking-Glass, where good things are not excluded, but perverted and rendered topsy-turvy."

[103] *Cf.* John G. Demaray, "The Thrones of Satan and God: Backgrounds to Divine Opposition in *Paradise Lost,*" *Huntington Library Quart.* **31** (1967): pp. 21–33.

[104] Though incited by an infernal Fury to war against Aeneas (and *a fortiori* against the divine destiny of Rome), Turnus is rather a counter-hero than an "epic villain"; Boltwood, cited *supra,* sees Turnus as "primarily heroic" and Satan as "primarily villainous."

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upon older epics and romances by reading them as moral allegories; and it becomes fairly common in the Renaissance epic tradition. Finally, there are more sinister antagonists: the monsters —giants, dragons, and chimaeras—that the hero must overcome as benefactor, winning deliverance for his people and glory for himself by destroying a public bane.

Satan clearly regards himself as a "worthy" antagonist of deity; and in the first books he almost appears to be such: "and seem'd/ Alone th' Antagonist of Heav'n." He is certainly a formidable opponent for man. The ideal of a worthy antagonist, however, leads to a comparison of merits; and in a theological epic the criterion of merit must be theological. In their seemingly helpless innocence Adam and Eve possess a native worth—and the minor angels Zephon, Ithuriel, Abdiel a native virtue—that the fallen Lucifer has irremediably lost. The merits of the loyal angels are real, but (as the battle in heaven reveals) they are inadequate to expel the forces of evil. The merits of fallen man are vain, but he may still hope to defeat his infernal Adversary through the merits of the Messiah. To raise the question of "worth" in *Paradise Lost* is to compare the merits of the devil with those of unfallen man, and those of fallen man with those of the Son of God. The image of Satan as worthy antagonist merges gradually into that of the valiant pagan, into those of tyrant and liar and robber and homicide, and finally into a dragon and a symbol of fraud. The eschatological stage is set for the advent of the Messianic hero as dragon-slayer, victorious over the infernal serpent and its monstrous progeny Sin and Death.

As Satan's role is shaped and reshaped through his opposition to God and man, it acquires clearer definition (though he does not clearly realize it) as a counter-image of the incarnate Word. The Adversary of God and Man, in endeavoring to spite God through Man, has precipitated his own imminent defeat by God-*in*-Man, by one who unites in a single person Satan's divine and human antagonists. His conqueror in heaven and his victim on earth, separated as they are by the entire hierarchy of angelic intelligences and the infinite gulf between Creator and creature, are nevertheless united in the *theanthropos* or God-man. The pattern of contraries is completed by the union of Satan's infinitely disparate rivals in a single individual, the person of Christ the Second Adam.

Satan is the Adversary, moreover, not only of the principal personages in the poem itself, but also of the poet and his "fit" audience, the *Christianus lector* who is born in the image of the Old Adam and must be reborn in the image of the New. Though it is unseemly to speak of *Paradise Lost* as propaganda, it was nonetheless designed as an instrument of psychological warfare, the combat of the church militant against the infernal triad: the world, the flesh, and the devil. The image it presents of Satan—a redoubtable but not invincible foe—belongs to a familiar category: the "know-your-enemy" literature. (John Donne had delivered the same martial admonition in his Third Satire: "Know thy foes," the "foule Devill," the world, the flesh.) In this portrait of the arch-enemy—his defeat by the Son of God in the apocalyptic Sixth Book, his easy victory over mankind even in its original state of perfection—Milton's audience could recognize not only the strength and cunning of its Adversary, and its own vulnerability and frailty, but the means of grace whereby the enemy might be ignominiously routed even by the common soldiery of the church militant.

The pattern of opposition between Satan and Messiah, the *eidolon* and the true image of divine majesty, is maintained in the transformation scene of Book X. The metamorphosis itself represents a partial execution of the sentence pronounced by the Messiah himself as divine judge; and as agent of the Father's will it is probably he himself who inflicts this penalty on his Adversary. Punished in the shape in which he sins, the devil recapitulates the sin of Adam and Eve; but his shape also recalls the symbolism of the obscure prophecy concerning his enmity with the woman's seed. He has suffered one article of his punishment, and he can now await further retribution; he will receive the deadly bruise sooner than he expects.

As the deliverer and restorer of his people, Satan parodies the mediatorial office of the Son, even though his "acts of benefit" are, in the final analysis, spurious. He delivers them from hell; but, like their liberator, they cannot truly escape their dungeon and must bear hell within them wherever they fly. Satan cannot restore the inner, spiritual liberty they have lost nor can he restore them to heaven. Similarly, the regeneration that he accomplishes so effectively in the early books, reviving the morale of his fallen companions through kindling false hopes of regaining heaven, is specious; it is a travesty of the true regenera-

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tion, the supernatural renovation that the Messiah alone can effect.[105]

Finally, Satan's role is defined by the analogies and contrasts it presents to that of fallen man. Deprived of grace, unregenerate and unrepentant, he becomes the type of the reprobate, the "pattern-hero" (so to speak) of the brutish conquerors and tyrants of the fallen world. Though he appears to stand at the crossroads, there is in fact only one direction open to him, and that is downwards. Unable to experience true regeneration, he can only degenerate. The contrast that he presents to fallen Adam—and fallen Samson—is all the more impressive for his suppression of despair and for his refusal to admit spiritual defeat. We see no "faintings, swoonings of despair." We hear open defiance of heaven rather than complaints of heaven's desertion. We encounter no *me miserum* until the soliloquy on Mount Niphates. The Manoa of *Samson Agonistes* may lament his son's "miserable change," and the Chorus a "change beyond report, thought, or belief"; but the Satan of *Paradise Lost* publicly refuses to admit that the tragic reversal is anything but external: the mind and the will remain inalterable.

At the beginning of Samson's tragedy of *re*generation the Chorus is astonished to find "That Heroic, that Renown'd . . . *Samson*" so incredibly changed. At the beginning of Satan's tragedy of *de*generation one is no less astonished to find the fallen archangel seemingly *un*changed—and more startled perhaps to see him presented as apparently "Heroic." Nevertheless Adam and Samson, for all their expressions of misery and near-despair, are progressively regenerated. Satan, on the other hand, for all his boasts of an unaltered spirit and for all his success in regenerating the morale of his followers, remains a fallen creature. Even in his opening speeches the rhetoric of heroic constancy reveals the characteristic *ethos* of reprobation: the obdurate refusal to repent. Though his boast of an unchangeable mind may disguise the full reality of the "hideous change" he and his fellows have suffered, the spiritual transformation he has experienced through his rebellion is irreversible. What appears to be a regeneration of strength and courage is in reality an effect of degeneration, of progressive hardening of the heart; like the despair that he so carefully conceals, it is a conventional sign of damnation.

XII

In their criticisms of the Satanic image, Miltonists have (as we have seen) diverged not only in their judgments of its heroism but in their opinions of its formal coherence. To one, the devil is consistently evil and consistently absurd. To another, the devil is progressively evil and essentially tragic. To others, the portrait is a mosaic of complementary or incompatible qualities; and the origin of these real or apparent contradictions is to be found in conflicts within the poet's own personality, in a failure in narrative technique, in the "tripartite" devil of theological tradition, or in the conscious alternation between different literary modes: comic and tragic, heroic and mock-heroic. For some readers, the character of Satan is fixed from the start and remains essentially unaltered; the change lies in the shifting perspectives that the poet offers the reader, the varying points of view from which we behold the ruined archangel. For others, the devil does change; and his alteration is consistently for the worse, a progressive degeneration. For still another group, he does not really degenerate; the poet degrades him.

The answer (I believe), like Milton's own allegory of the dismembered and scattered body of truth, is dispersed among these diverse and seemingly inconsistent insights. Milton did (as Professor Kastor has effectively argued) inherit a tripartite fiend—aspiring Lucifer, infernal king, and subtle serpent—but he also attempted to give this composite image credibility and consistency, to make the transition from one role to another appear probable and necessary. The poet does (as other critics have recognized) present the Adversary through diverse literary modes and from different points of view; nevertheless a change in perspective does not preclude a fundamental change in character. Satan does in fact degenerate, and he is also, in the end, deliberately degraded. He degenerates, moreover, because he cannot do otherwise, because he is denied the

[105] In "'Paradise Lost': The Relevance of Regeneration," *Paradise Lost: A Tercentenary Tribute*, ed. Balachandra Rajan (Toronto, 1969), pp. 48–78, Arthur E. Barker recognized in the "perverse Satanic recovery of the two opening books" a gigantic parody of "the recovery that is open to fallen men through the actions of the Mediator," a caricature of the "process through which we may be restored by 'one greater man.'" Similarly Satan's "ascent into created light" parodies the "experience of illumination through the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

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grace to be *re*generated. Having fallen once, the fallen angel must continue to fall (he is not merely an archangel ruined, but an archangel *ruining*); and his way downward is accelerated by the very power that, at the moment of apparent triumph, suddenly degrades him. The laws of inertia apply no less in the moral than in the physical universe.

There is "motion in corruption," wrote Donne; and his observation is relevant for the kind of motion and alteration that we perceive in Milton's anti-hero. Satan's character does not "develop" (in the literal sense of the word); the changes we recognize are symptoms not of moral growth but of decay. Though they may resemble a process of development—the progressive maturation of the first world-conqueror—they are, in fact, a developing perfection in non-being: a growing maturity in "privatives," evil and misery and death. Self-corrupted and corrupting others, seeking ease and relief through destroying, Satan is powerless to generate true being; what he *appears* to generate proves (paradoxically) to be corruption. He begets Sin and Death (both privatives); he establishes his empire on evil (a privative) and the security of his throne on misery (also a privative). The "Universe of death" over which he rules as captive-king is a pseudo-reality where all true values—and even the processes of generation and corruption—are inverted, a realm of oxymoron and unresolved paradox:

> Where all life dies, death lives, and Nature breeds,
> Perverse, all monstrous, all prodigious things. . . .

Satan is, in fact, a sort of moral zombie; he is spiritually dead, his "right reason" darkened and his liberty of will enslaved by sin. If one may judge by analogy with the fall of man, the "life of the understanding" and the life of the will have both perished at the moment of his apostasy; the renewed energy, the revived strength he displays in the opening scenes are ironically undercut by the reality of his spiritual death. He continues, of course, to reason, to will, and to act; but he is no longer able to "discern the chief good" or free to choose and enact the good. Confronted successively by occasions for choice—moral or political alternatives, and strategic or tactical decisions—he chooses; but he could scarcely choose otherwise. The early dedication to evil ("Evil be thou my Good") is inevitable for one who can no longer elect the good. On successive occasions—his first sight of Eden, his first view of Adam and Eve, his return to the garden, his glimpse of Eve among the roses—he can experience twinges of conscience and disparage his own fell intent. (Apparently goodness can enter the mind of fiend or archfiend—like evil in the mind of god or man—and, unapproved, leave no stain behind.) Each of these apparent opportunities for repentance—*apparent* only, for he cannot repent—proves an occasion for sin, and he rededicates himself anew to evil. The momentary wavering, the temporary thaw in his resolve, merely strengthens his resolution by hardening his heart. In these scenes we encounter, in a less terrifying form, the same obduracy, the same obstinacy in evil, that had provoked the rebel angels to contend against the Son: "hard'n'd more by what might most reclaim." (In hardening the heart and blinding the understanding—as Milton explains in his theological treatise—God employs methods that "ought rather to soften the hearts of sinners than to harden them.") Technically, these are "evil temptations" since they are "occasions of sin" and involve the denial of divine grace, the hardening of the heart, and (to a degree) the blinding of the understanding.

"The hardening of the heart," Milton declares, ". . . is usually the last punishment inflicted on inveterate wickedness and unbelief in this life." In Satan, who has been denied grace, this sign of reprobation appears comparatively early in his career, immediately prior to his expulsion from heaven and again immediately after his regaining consciousness in hell. The fixed mind and unconquerable will are (as we have seen) characteristic signs of reprobation. Soon after, beholding the might and multitude of his troops, he is again hardened, glorying in his strength. These evidences of his reprobation serve to fix his character at the beginning of the poem, to cast doubt both on the reality of his heroic *ethos* and on the validity of his rhetoric, and to foreshadow his further degeneration. Satan has clearly been given over to "a reprobate mind"; and, in the light of seventeenth-century theology, a reader might logically expect to see the reprobate's hypocrisy unmasked (as on Mount Niphates) or punished with "strong delusion" (as in the transformation scene of Book X). Finally, the image of Satan as archetypal reprobate reinforces his role as arch-tyrant and the specific analogies with Pharaoh, Nimrod, and other rulers of a fallen world. For God "often hardens in a remarkable manner the powerful and rebellious princes of

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this world, in order that through their insolence and haughtiness his glory may be magnified among the nations."

Satan's doom is irreversible, and his rebellion unredeemable. He can only prosecute his rebellion by new and more devious means. The redeemer of fallen man must be the destroyer of the fallen angel. Unable to elect the good, the devil has little freedom of action even in evil. The "sovereign disposer of all things" still "inclines and biasses" Satan's depraved and perverted will "in this or that direction, or towards this or that object" in accordance with a divine plan, influencing it in such a way "that out of its own wickedness it either operates good for others, or punishment for itself."[106]

The character of Satan changes or "develops" in much the same sense that the character of Macbeth (a tragic hero in Milton's own dramatic sketches) develops. One beholds the moral ruin of a once valiant thane through ambition for a kingdom—an ambition that leads successively to the acquisition of dominion by villainy, to government by tyranny, to an inability to escape the vicious circle of his own creation, and finally to *tedium vitae* and disgust. It is a weary and desperate Satan whom we reencounter on the eve of his conquest, just as it is a tired and desperate Macbeth whom we encounter before and during his final battle.

As heroic *eidolon*, Satan embodies a false standard of heroic virtue from the moment of his revolt; and it would be sophistical, perhaps, to inquire whether the heroic illusion literally degenerates. As pseudo-hero he wears a succession of heroic masks, shifting from one heroic formula to another as expediency dictates; but (with one exception) the formulas themselves are, by Milton's standards, either morally neutral or false. (The one exception is the devil's conscious or unconscious mimicry of the Son of God; in this instance, the heroic standard is valid, but the Adversary perverts it.) Some of these formulas impress the reader as more "heroic" than others; and to classical heroes like Neoptolemus and Rhesus, Odysseus's policy of covert guile seemed contemptible in comparison with open force.[107] In comparison with his defiance of an enemy infinitely superior to himself, Satan's sneak attack on a foe notably inferior to himself in native intelligence and strength seems unworthy of the antagonist of heaven. The devil appears most heroic (as the majority of readers confess) when he is hurling epic boasts and blasphemies at his divine enemy from the opposite corner of the universe, not when he is bombarding the faithful angels with cannon balls and puns in frontal attack or triumphing over Eve by guile. Though these heroic formulas are illusory, most of them have precedents in classical and Renaissance epic or history. Satan consistently maintains the false appearance of heroism, but (in the eyes of the reader and to a degree in his own view) the sequence of heroic masks—general to king to spy—seems progressively less heroic.

Machiavellian disciple (or preceptor) that he is, Satan discards the virtue and justice of the man at the very beginning of his rebellion to imitate the lion in violence and the fox in cunning; and, by a delayed symbolic justice, he eventually loses his "godlike" human, or superhuman, form. In this respect his apparent "degeneration" as heroic image is the external reflection of his inevitable spiritual deterioration as archetypal reprobate. Since he has already lost the divine image internally, his "godlike" shape is merely an illusion; and the spiritual reality underlying this heroic façade is progressively manifested both through physical deformity and through diminished glory. For the imagery of light had been conventionally associated with the hero. *Phaidimos* (shining or famous) had been a common epithet of the Homeric warrior; and the Renaissance hero was, by definition, "illustrious."[108] When Achilles shows himself to the Trojans at a critical moment (*Iliad,* Book XVIII), Athena encircles his head with a golden nimbus and kindles a flame like a flare. Venus does no less for her son Aeneas when he first appears to Dido (*Aeneid,* Book I), surrounding his face and shoulders with sudden radiance. Piccolomini defines heroic virtue in such terms as *splendor* and *fulgor*.[109] Davenant praised Tasso for reviving

[106] See Milton's *Christian Doctrine,* Book I, Chapters 8 and 12; *Prose Works,* ed. St. John (1970), pp. 200–209, 264–265. See also Mary Anne Nevins Radzinowicz, "Eve and Dalila: Renovation and the Hardening of the Heart," in: *Reason and the Imagination,* ed. J. A. Mazzeo (New York, 1962), pp. 155–181.

[107] *Milton's Epic Characters,* pp. 204–205.

[108] Like *illustris, phaidimos* bears the related senses of (1) *shining* and (2) *famous* or *glorious;* Liddell and Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford, 1889).

[109] *Milton's Epic Characters,* pp. 26–27; *cf.* p. 325.

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the "Heroick flame."[110] Hobbes perceived "in Princes, and men of conspicuous power (anciently called *Heroes*) a lustre and influence upon the rest of men, resembling that of the Heavens."[111] Dryden extolled the "shining quality of an epic hero" and his virtues.[112] Like "eminence," luster belongs to the traditional conception of heroic virtue; and in Milton's repeated allusions to Satan's eminence and the vestiges of his former glory one recognizes the deliberate evocation of a heroic commonplace. The devil will lose his proud eminence in "shape and gesture"—metamorphosed into a creeping serpent—but he will also be stripped of another heroic attribute, the "Original brightness" that still invests his form.[113] In this respect also, the ravages of spiritual death are reflected externally in the degeneration and final degradation of the heroic image.

Satan exhibits the first recognizable "Image of Heroique vertue" in *Paradise Lost;* but it is (alas) neither "venerable" nor "amiable."[114] The spiritual realities underlying these superficial "accidents" of heroism are apparent from the very beginning of the poem in spite of (or indeed *through*) the devil's own words. In the course of the action these realities are progressively defined through the development of character and plot, and repeatedly emphasized through external physical signs. Finally, they are represented emblematically and symbolically through the kind of moralized metamorphosis that any reader of the Renaissance Ovid could clearly understand. Like the decay of Satan's visible glory, his transformation from godlike to brutish shape is a reflection of the alteration in his character; it involves a dramatic change from the symbolic form of heroic virtue to the symbolic form of its contrary vice.

Nevertheless more than the mere pretense of heroism has been lost; and more than the heroic image has been destroyed. The darkening of original luster, the transition from Lucifer to lucifuge, and the metamorphoses from archangelic to bestial form—these involve a positive reversal of the original order of creation: the production of light out of darkness, and of peace out of discord. In the alterations in Satan's character, and in his external form, we encounter the exact reverse of these processes. We see not only the transformation of apparent heroic virtue into its logical contrary, but (more significantly) a progressive moral annihilation, a spiritual *de*creation.[115] In

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[110] Gladish, p. 5.

[111] Gladish, p. 109.

[112] Watson 2: p. 228.

[113] In Book I of *Paradise Lost,* Milton describes Satan as standing "above the rest/ In shape and gesture proudly eminent . . . ; his form had not yet lost/ All her Original brightness, nor appear'd/ Less than Arch-Angel ruin'd; and th' excess/ Of Glory obscured." Although "Dark'n'd" like an eclipsed sun, "yet shone/ Above them all th' Arch-Angel." In Book II we see him exalted to the "bad eminence" and bejeweled splendor of a Sultan's throne. In Book IV he learns with indignation and grief that even in his "own shape," he is no longer recognizable:

> Think not, revolted Spirit, thy shape the same,
> Or undiminisht brightness, to be known
> As when thou stood'st in Heav'n upright and pure;
> That Glory then, when thou no more wast good,
> Departed from thee, and thou resembl'st now
> Thy sin and place of doom obscure and foul.

Recognizing the "awful" power of goodness and the beauty of virtue "in her shape," Satan "pin'd/ His loss; but chiefly to find here observ'd/ His lustre visibly impair'd. . . ." We next see him through Gabriel's eyes: a figure "of Regal port,/ But faded splendor wan; who by his gait/ And fierce demeanor seems the Prince of Hell. . . ."

In Book X, shortly before his humiliation, he emerges (like Aeneas) from invisibility in a blaze of light:

> At last as from a Cloud his fulgent head
> And shape Star-bright appear'd, or brighter, clad
> With what permissive glory since his fall
> Was left him, or false glitter: All amaz'd
> At that so sudden blaze the *Stygian* throng
> Bent their aspect. . . .

The stellar imagery is an appropriate comparison for the former Lucifer, whose countenance was "as the Morning Star"; but it also recalls the star-similes (ominous in the case of Hector and Achilles, less baleful in the case of Diomedes) in the *Iliad.* See Cedric H. Whitman, *Homer and the Heroic Tradition* (New York, 1965), pp. 128–153, on the imagery of fire, lightning, starlight, mist, and other natural phenomena in the *Iliad.* Milton transfers the ominous associations of Homer's star-imagery to the simile of a solar eclipse. In a complementary simile he compares the withered glory of Satan's legions not to fire but to forest trees scathed by lightning ("Heav'n's Fire"). Immediately thereafter, however, the "sudden blaze" of their flaming swords "Far round illumin'd hell."

[114] Gladish, p. 50.

[115] If the fate of Satan is essentially a tragedy of reprobation, we should recall that for seventeenth-century readers this would be the tragedy of their greatest Adversary and archenemy and that its tragic effects would probably be correspondingly limited. It would be unduly charitable to expect the descendants of fallen Adam to feel excessive pity for the demon who had first beguiled their common ancestor and was actively seeking their own eternal damnation. Satan's tragedy might (as in Raphael's narration to Adam) provide a "terrible Example" of the "reward/ Of Disobedience" and arouse a comparable "fear to transgress," but it is difficult to imagine either Milton or his contemporaries feeling the kind

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Satan's degeneration we recognize the gradual fulfillment of Abdiel's prophecy:

Then who created thee lamenting learn,
When who can uncreate thee thou shalt know.

of sympathy with the devil that an audience would experience toward the kind of tragic hero proposed by Aristotle's *Poetics*. For readers who genuinely believed in the devil's reality, the very harshness of the fate Milton assigns him could be not merely an admonition but a theme for reassurance; the strict justice allotted the devil would, by contrast, heighten their awareness of the universal grace vouchsafed to man. In Milton's system, only the rebel angels are, in the strictest sense, "reprobate," that is, explicitly excluded from grace. In contrast to the severe justice accorded to the devils, free and infinite grace is extended to all men, and even the so-called "reprobate" among them possess the power and ability to repent. The example of Satan may serve as a warning to the unrepentant, depicting the fate that awaits them if they remain obstinate; but, unlike the devil, they are not excluded from grace. According to the *Christian Doctrine* (*Prose Works,* ed. St. John, Vol. IV, p. 70) no man is excluded by divine decree "from the pale or repentance and eternal salvation, unless it be after the contempt and rejection of grace, and that at a very late hour." The opportunities are markedly different in the case of the fallen angels.

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